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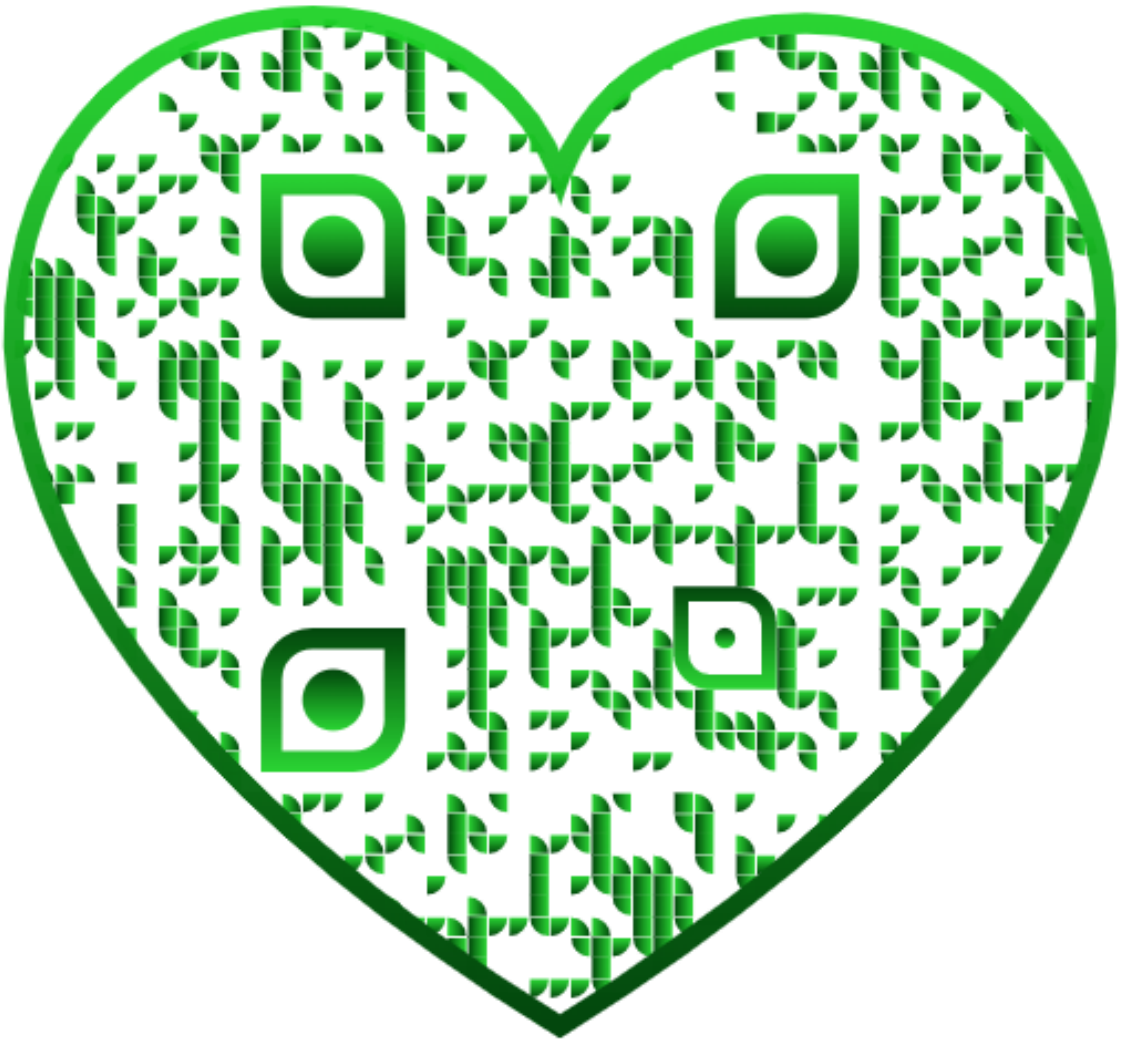

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Welcome...

My Red Hot Chili Peppers fandom began in 1991 with *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*. I was 15 and this was the band's breakthrough release, their second outing with guitarist John Frusciante. Some say *BSSM* remains the band's finest work to date, and while I admit it's probably my favourite Chilis album, it strikes me that Frusciante is not someone who rests on his prior success. He's always looking for a new creative direction.

This month, as the Chilis release their twelfth studio album *Unlimited Love*, we speak with an invigorated John Frusciante about where he has found his renewed inspiration. It's fascinating stuff. John explains how he got himself in the right headspace to play for the band and write rock songs again – he left the Chilis in 2009 remember, and he's been more focused on electronic music since. I don't want to spoil the feature for you, but John's insights into how he listened and learned from artists as diverse as Charlie Christian, Jeff Beck and Kurt Cobain make for an engrossing read. I should be careful not to paint a picture of a guitarist who's stuck in the past though, because John also talks at length about more recent players who inspire him. As I say, I won't spoil it for you.

It's a joy to have John in the magazine. It amazes me that someone of his stature remains so humble and passionate for his art. He's as engaged in music as it's possible to be, and if our couple of hours chatting to him tells us anything, it's just how much he clearly loves to talk about playing the guitar.

Chris Bird Editor

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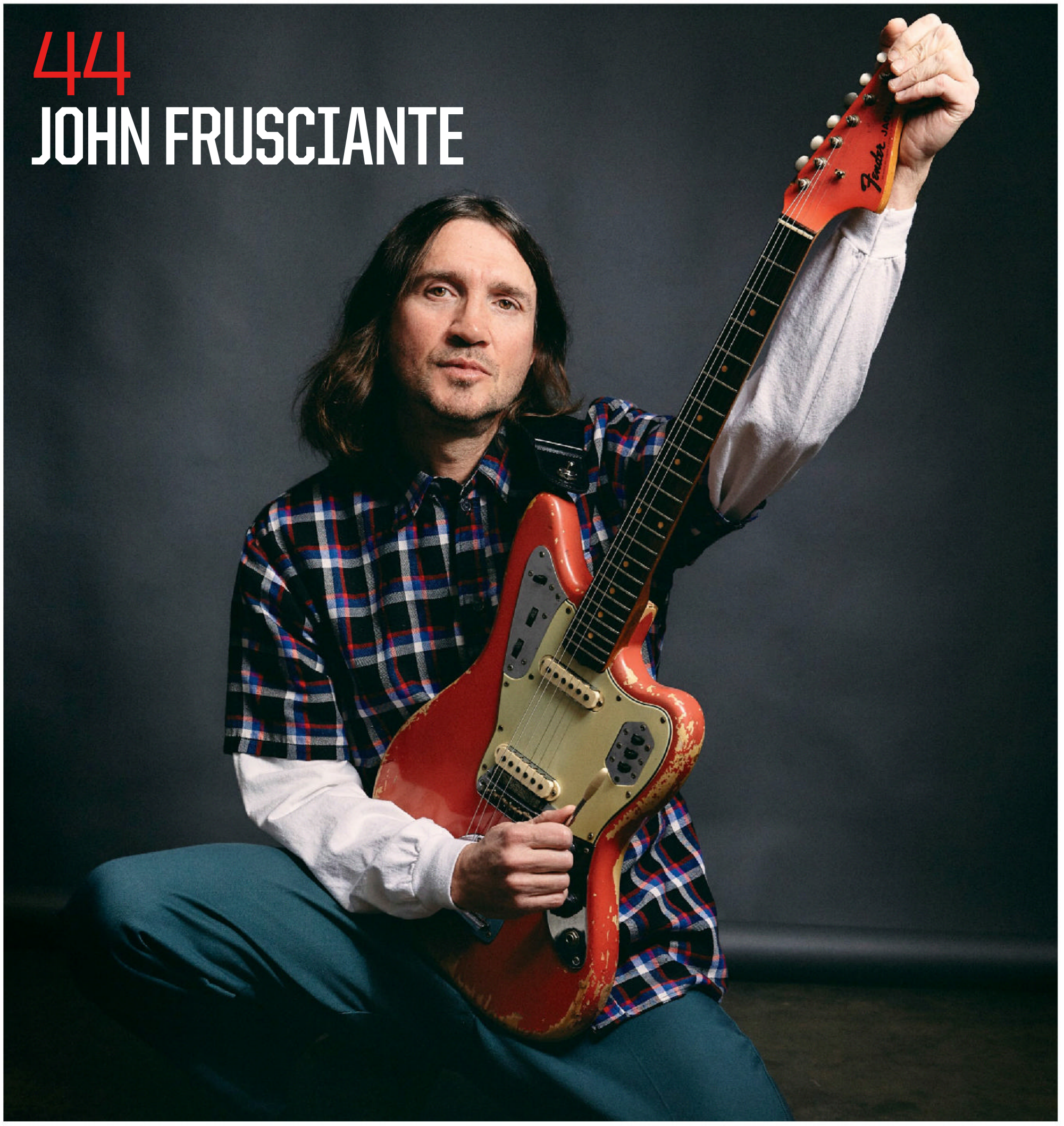

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Type this link into a web browser on any computer, smartphone or tablet and you'll be directed to TG's website at guitarworld.com. Here you'll find all the audio and video for the issue, available to download or stream.

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Photo Lynn Goldsmith **Words** Paul Elliott

"PUT ANOTHER DIME IN THE JUKEBOX, BABY!"

In this issue of ***Total Guitar***, Halestorm's Lzzy Hale says of her role as Gibson's first female Brand Ambassador: "The most beautiful thing about what I do now with Gibson is that you get to put yourself up there in a way that, for the generation of young girls that want to get into this instrument, makes the bridge to that dream just a little bit shorter – just like when I was younger and saw Joan Jett playing [the] guitar."

In 1982, when this photo was taken, Joan Jett & The Blackhearts held the number one spot on the US chart for seven weeks with *I Love Rock 'N' Roll* – a brilliant version of a previously little known song by British group The Arrows.

40 years on, Joan is part of the biggest live event in America this summer – the Stadium Tour, co-headlined by Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe.

As Leppard guitarist Phil Collen tells TG: "What makes Joan Jett a great guitar player is the fact she uses the guitar to represent her, without any pretentious complications. *I Love Rock 'N' Roll* is a great song, classic in its simplicity. It's like her guitar playing – it has integrity and isn't pretentious. It's a killer rock song that makes everyone, whatever genre they're into, want to sing along to it."

SCENE
YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS

INTERVIEW

"WE PULLED OUT SOME WILD PEDALS!"

ZACH MYERS ON THE ESSENTIAL GEAR USED FOR **SHINEDOWN**'S NEW ALBUM

From his home studio, which harbours in excess of 120 guitars, Shinedown guitarist Zach Myers discusses how he and bassist Eric Bass combined vintage instruments with an 'anything goes' approach on the band's dark new album *Planet Zero*.

What guitars do we hear on the album?
Eric has two 70s pancake body Les Paul Deluxes that we used a lot. I have a '65 ES-335 that's been used on every Shinedown record I've done. I love that thing – it can sound like anything: a Tele, a Les Paul, a Strat. It's so versatile. Then there were a couple of Teles, and that was the record. I think when you pick up a certain guitar, it has a certain feel. If I pick up a Tele, I want to play more aggressively and put it on the bridge pickup. If you listen to *The Saints Of Violence And Innuendo*, that's straight-up Tele through a Marshall. If I pick up a 335, I'm either going to write more of a ballady-type thing.

Did you go for 'real' amps this time around?
Mostly. Eric has two Marshall 800s that he just loves, and there's a Revv amp that we used a little bit. The secret weapon on this was an Epiphone combo that sounds amazing. But if you listen to *Planet Zero*, the first single, I remember sitting watching Eric play the main riff, driving himself completely nuts, to end up six months later going back to the demo. The sound that you hear when that song comes on the radio, is a Kemper. And by the way, it's not a custom-made thing, it's one of the generic profiles, but I'm not going to tell you which one.

Please?
Alright! Dry Metal, I think, is the tone.

Did you experiment with a lot of pedals?
We pulled out some wild pedals. There was a bunch of EarthQuaker Devices stuff. We used a tonne of Astral Destiny and the Jack White Plasma pedal – the Third Man edition. That pedal's all over the record. We had milk crates full of pedals. That's a true story – we had literal milk crates! That was the cool thing Eric would do if we were stuck or bored, he'd be like, 'Go grab something' and we'd plug it in.

What were some of the top tones you found?
People always talk about the solo on *Dead Don't Die* and they're like, 'How in the world did you do this?' Honestly, the solo was easy because it was one solid take. I think everybody thinks we went into Pro Tools and messed with a bunch of stuff. That wasn't it. I started playing the solo and it sounded normal, then Eric took the whammy pedal and started doing random sh*t to it – turning knobs, putting it halfway down, putting it all the way down, and turning it off and on. That's my favourite solo because it sounds so weird – almost out of tune, and very Tom Morello-ish.

Ellie Rogers

LAMB OF GOD
SHINEDOWN

EFFECTS

GREEN ENERGY

As Line 6's mean, green, delay machine approaches its mid-20s, the Calabasas crew has surprised us all with its long-awaited follow-up: the DL4 Mk II. Featuring twice as many delay models as the original, Line 6 has added 16 Helix-derived delay models which join all of the original sounds so that users can upgrade and keep their original patches. There's massively-extended 240-second internal memory, expandable to hours via the new SD card slot. Plus, you can now loop vocals by connecting a mic to the XLR slot, add external footswitches or an expression pedal, and control the DL4 over MIDI.

MINI-AMP

SPARK NOTES

Positive Grid has shrunk its award-winning Spark amp into an even more desktop-friendly version with the Spark Mini. The rechargeable battery-powered Spark addition also works as a Bluetooth speaker, hosts 33 amp models and 43 effects, and only features three controls on its panel for volume, backing track volume and selection of four presets. The rest of the control is via the free iOS/Android Spark app.

As well as allowing you to design and edit your sounds, the app also unlocks PG's Smart Jam auto-generating backing track feature, Auto Chords for figuring out songs, plus Video Capture for recording clips of your playing. ***It's available to order now from www.positivegrid.com***

PEDAL AMP

PEDAL POWER

Pedalboard-based amps are big news, and Hughes & Kettner's latest offers a fully-analogue, 50-watt solution at your feet. The StompMan aims to recreate the feel and response of a full amp head in a compact pedal solution by using the brand's Spirit technology with Tone, Gain, Master, Presence and Resonance controls, as well as a Sagging control which changes the amount of power amp saturation. As well as this, there's a footswitchable boost circuit labelled 'Solo' which can provide up to 6dB of additional volume.

The StompMan also includes a switchable FX loop/line out and speaker output. It's available now with a full price of €199.

GUITAR

START YOUR ENGINES!

YAMAHA'S DOUBLECUT IS BACK, AND IT'S PACKED WITH NEW FEATURES

Back in 2015, Yamaha unveiled the Revstar: at the time its first all-new electric guitar design in over a decade, inspired by Yamaha's Café Racer motorbike heritage. Fast-forward seven years, and Yamaha has scratched the infamous itch with a complete Revstar range overhaul with a simplified line-up spanning three different price points, and adding a number of features designed to reduce weight, boost resonance and improve your tone.

The new Revstar range is split into the Japanese-made Professional (RSP), and more affordable Standard (RSS) and Element (RSE) ranges.

Key to the build of all new Revstars, is a chambered body design which sees some pretty sizeable chunks of wood removed from the mahogany base either side of the pickups and extending into those horns. This not only reduces the overall weight of each guitar, but Yamaha reckons it's been carefully implemented in order to help the Revstars reach a whole new level of resonance.

But the construction-based tone and performance-shaping doesn't end there, because for the Professional and Standard models, Yamaha has also fitted carbon reinforcements to aid strength and the transfer of vibrations between the strings and wood.

Also included on the top-two series' are Yamaha's re-thought electronics, with a five-position selector switch featuring each pickup solo or together, plus out-of-phase modes in positions two and four. The tone pot features a push/pull pot, and Yamaha has used it for its Focus switch, which gives you a passive boost when engaged. Let's dive in!

The upper-level Professional and Standard ranges have the most in common, both offering maple-topped mahogany bodies, and a choice of humbuckers with Tune-O-Matic-style bridge and tailpiece (RSP/RSS20 models) or P90-style pickups with a retro-looking tailpiece (RSP/RSS 02T models). We mentioned carbon earlier and the Professional models feature this at its fullest, with two strips running down the neck flanking the truss rod, and again in the body running horizontally, sandwiching the stoptail posts. The Standard series features carbon reinforcement in the neck only, but both ranges make use of the five-way switching and Focus control. What's more, the Standard series '20' model as a left-handed version, giving us the RSS20L. There's a wildcard in the RSP pack too, with the show-pony RSP20X offering some additional visuals with colour-matched body binding and an anodised aluminium scratchplate.

Finally, there's the Element series, which at a glance mixes some of the new design with features of the original Revstars at a competitive price point. First, the Element is only available as a humbucker-equipped '20' model. You still get the chambered body, this time without the maple top, and there's no carbon. The electronics hark back to the older Revstar models, with a three-way selector and the familiar Dry' filter switch on the push/pull. Lefties will also be glad to hear that Yamaha haven't forgotten them here, with the RSE20L available in either Swift Blue or Black.

Finishing options across the series include 10 different colour options, with Swift Blue being common to every model. For a full list of finishes in each Revstar range check out the Yamaha website.

Stuart Williams

MONITOR

PEOPLE ✪ NEWS ✪ NOISE

Words Stuart Williams **Photography** Phil Barker

LEARN TO FLY

Meet Jet Guitars - one of the latest names turning heads in the budget market

You might be familiar with Jet Guitars, thanks to a burgeoning following online as a relative newcomer to the budget end of the market. The brand launched in 2020 as the brainchild of designer Primoz Virant, with Chinese manufacture and QC overseen by Jet's own team, with the goal of offering premium gear at affordable prices. Since then, Jet has steadily started making a name for itself with eight series' of affordable electrics on offer.

Here, we have a selection of three of the models from the 400 (Vintage Yellow HSS, £159), 500 (Silver sparkle HH, £289) and 800 Series (Black relic HS, £409) respectively. There are no prizes for guessing where the inspiration begins for these models, with Jet's line-up also including T-style and singlecut models. But there's more going on here than straight derivation, because Jet has packed in some killer specs.

Across the board, we're presented with roasted Canadian maple necks, and in this case, either roasted maple or mixed ebony fingerboards. To the back, the neck heels are sculpted to give greater access to the top frets. The pickups are Jet's own, and they offer ceramic or Alnico models, depending on which guitar you select. We'll be taking a full look in a forthcoming issue.

To see the full range, check out www.jetguitars.com

UP CLOSE

Affordable

The most expensive guitar Jet makes costs around £539, with the JS400, JS500 and JS800 pictured coming in at £159/£289 and £409.

Roasted necks

Roasted necks are becoming increasingly popular for stability, and Jet is offering them on all of its guitars.

Configurations

The pickup configurations and finishing options vary between the series, and there are other shapes on offer, adding up to something for everyone.

FIRST STEPS IN GUITAR...

MUTING & CHANGES

Having figured out how to hold the guitar and play simple riffs, TG's Content Editor **Paul Elliott** takes on palm muting and changing between chords

Last month Paul learned to hold his guitar and pick, fret notes, and strum a chord. Then he played some riffs in open position. Now it's time to work on chord changes. These are the biggest hurdle for most beginners, and they normally take quite a while to click. Just fretting one chord cleanly is a challenge at first, and it can be frustrating to get one right and immediately have to change. Jenna's also designed a palm muting exercise with one chord throughout, so when Paul's sick of fretting-hand struggles he can do something totally different.

TEACHER

JENNA SCARAMANGA
Jenna has taught guitar for 15 years at music colleges, schools, and IGF summer camps. She studied with Guthrie Govan at BIMM, and was classic rock columnist for TG's sister magazine *Guitar Techniques*.

STUDENT

PAUL ELLIOTT
Paul has written about music since 1985 for various titles including *Sounds*, *Kerrang!*, *Q*, *MOJO* and *Classic Rock*. Among the many guitarists he has interviewed are Slash, Angus Young, Keith Richards and Jimmy Page.

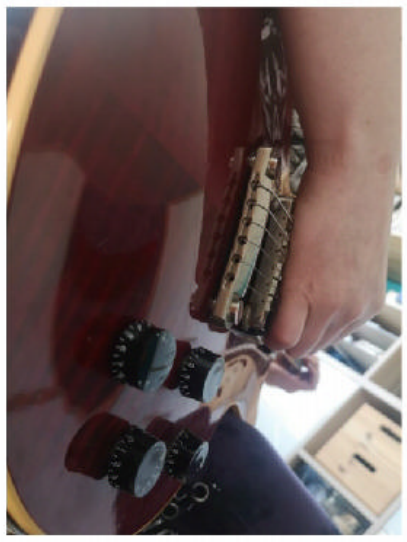
JENNA SAYS...

I always introduce palm muting in the first few lessons because it's part of every electric guitar genre. It's a fairly easy technique, so it's worth starting early. And you can practise it on an open string, so it's useful when your fretting hand is tired. The art is in shifting between muted and unmuted picking. Every great palm muted riff, like *Master Of Puppets* or Michael Jackson's *Don't Stop Till You Get Enough*, uses that shift. You need to find a position for unmuted picking that's similar to the palm muted position, so you don't have to move far between them.

Paul is already having trouble finding time to practise – a common problem in today's busy lifestyles. We'll look at that next month. For now, I've kept the exercises brief so he can practise whenever he has a few seconds spare.

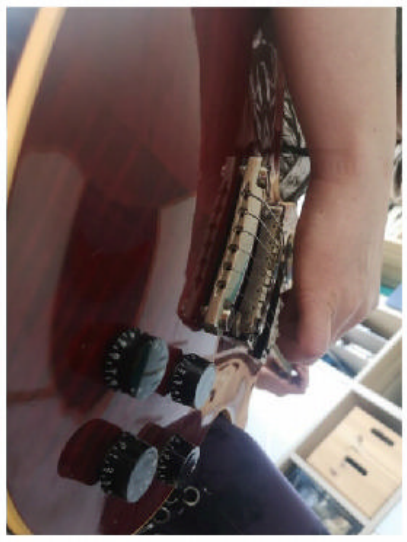
TECHNIQUE CHECK...

Get your fingers in the right place and your powerchords will rock!



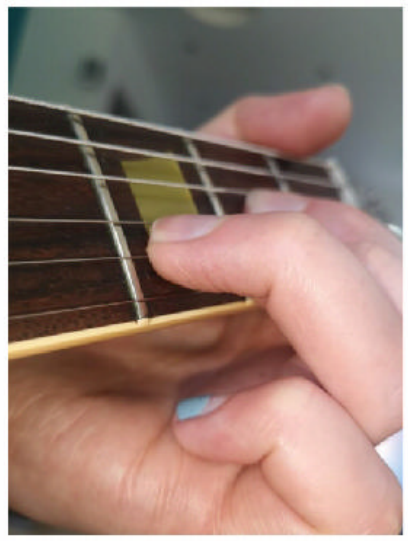
1 MUTED POSITION

Imagine you're doing a karate chop. Rest that part of your picking-hand as close to the bridge saddles as possible, on the strings you want to mute.



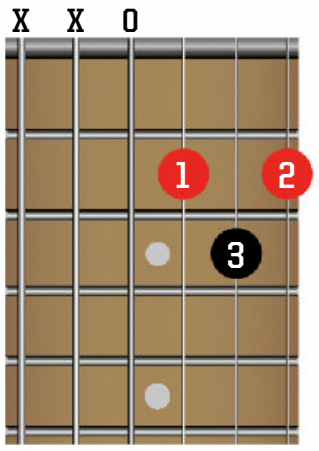
2 UNMUTED POSITION

Use a small wrist rotation to lift your palm off the strings, but stay close so you can quickly shift from muted to unmuted.



3 D MAJOR CHORD

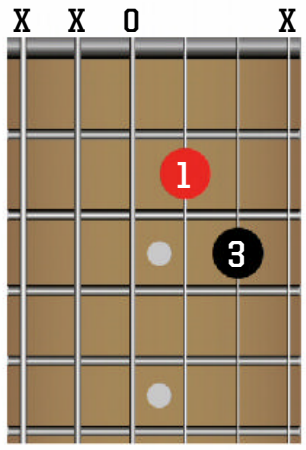
Your third finger needs to be arched, like this. If the knuckle collapses, it will choke the E string.



D

4 D MAJOR CHORD

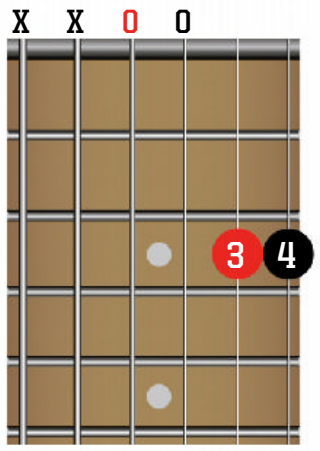
This diagram shows you where to place your fingers in a D major chord. The numbers tell you which of your four fingers to use. The black dot is a root note.



D5

5 D5 POWERCHORD

Good news: if you accidentally choke the high E, it creates a D5 powerchord. It's not the intended chord, but it still sounds good.



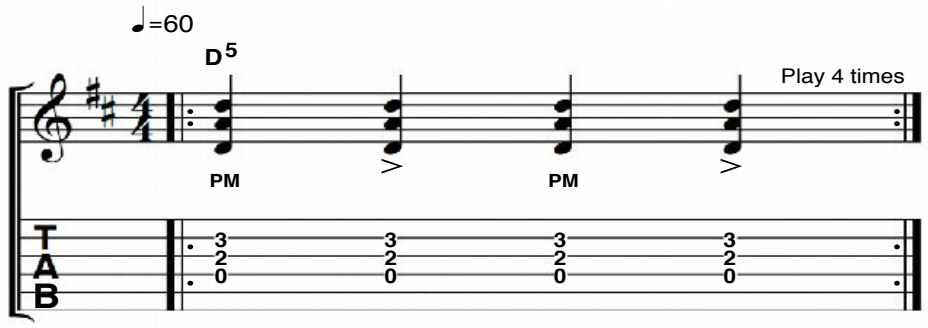
G5

6 PARTIAL G5 CHORD

Paul learned this chord last month, and he's practising switching between this and the D major shape.

PALM MUTING: D5 CHORD

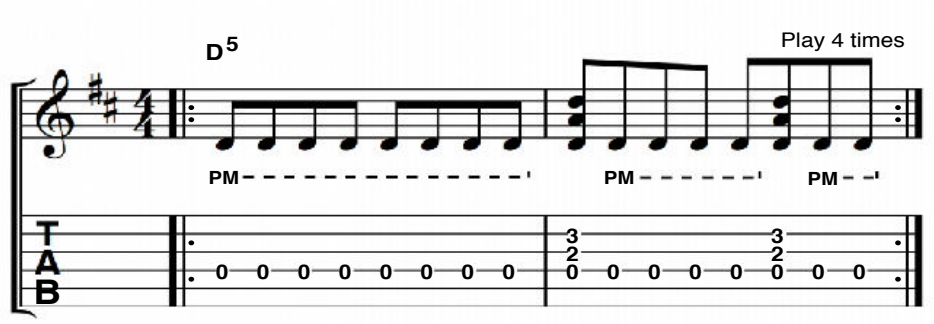
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Now try this palm muting exercise. The first and third stabs are palm muted; the second and fourth ones ring out. Listen to our audio to hear the difference.

PALM MUTING: ROCK RIFF

BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Concentrate on timing and good tone here in our hard rock riff. The second chord stab in bar 2 is played off the beat so listen carefully. It's fine if your muted strums catch more than one string – as long as they stay muted!

PAUL SAYS...

When Jenna refers to my "fretting-hand struggles" she's not kidding. This is the greatest challenge for me as a beginner. When playing chords I have found it very difficult to achieve the correct finger placing without choking a string. That said, I have really enjoyed getting to grips with palm-muting after Jenna showed me what it's all about – by playing an 80s classic, *Summer Of '69* by Bryan Adams. Imagining that you're doing a karate chop with the picking hand is a perfect way to illustrate this technique – and that part of it has come fairly easily. The problem is with the other hand, which is what I will be focusing on when practising. I am still a long way from nailing *Master Of Puppets*, but with all due respect to Bryan Adams, a lovely man whom I've interviewed many times, I feel that *Summer Of '69* isn't too far out of reach even for me.

Words Amit Sharma **Photos** Jack Moran

"I'M TRYING TO FIND THE ULTIMATE RIFF!"

Inspired by ABBA and 80s hair metal, the new **Ghost** album is a modern rock masterpiece. Its creator Tobias Forge reveals how he did it - and why he needed a better guitarist than himself for the solos...

Over the last decade, no new band has taken the world by storm quite like Swedish occult rockers Ghost. The group – masterminded by core songwriter and founder Tobias Forge, who is backed by a revolving door of 'Nameless Ghouls' – have gone from performing at London's 500-capacity Underworld to headlining at the O2 Arena.

Ghost's debut album *Opus Eponymous*, released in 2010 on cult stoner label Rise Above, won them fans far and wide for its devilishly melodic doom, drawing comparisons to Blue Öyster Cult and The Doors alongside heavier influences like Black Sabbath. But it was their second album *Infestissumam* that saw them introduce bigger productions with more complex musical structures and arrangements, a tradition which continued through third and fourth records *Meliora* and *Prequelle* to further critical acclaim.

New album *Impera* was recorded at Stockholm's Atlantis Studio with *Meliora* producer Klas Åhlund behind the desk and Opeth virtuoso Fredrik Åkesson hired to track acoustic, rhythm and lead guitars. It's undoubtedly the sound of Ghost at their most technically ambitious, with some truly breathtaking fretwork at the forefront of some of their catchiest songs to date.

"I guess what makes my work different to your average rock band is that I'm just about an able guitar player," says Tobias Forge with admirable humility. "I peaked a long time ago, which is why I don't practise enough anymore! I hit a wall where my fingers didn't really obey. These days I'm more of a songwriter and conceptual creator, to be honest. I can handle a guitar, a bass, drums and also sing. I can make a song sound basically how I want it to myself, with a nice sketch of what a solo should be temperamentally."

Tobias points to an 80s hair metal hit, *Rock The Night* by fellow Swedish band Europe, for an example of a note-perfect solo we can all learn from, praising guitarist John Norum's sense of melody, build and restraint. And his love for Europe doesn't end there, citing Norum's late-80s replacement Kee Marcello as one of the greatest soloists of all-time. "There's only one hard bit in that *Rock The Night* solo, but it's the perfect spot to shine," Tobias says. "And, as much as I love John Norum's playing on tracks like that, I always felt when Kee joined for [1988 album] *Out Of This World*, he sounded truly out of this world! Still to this day, I cannot believe how good he sounds on that record."

He continues: "I always want solos to feel like their own little composition. For me, the whole 'come in and noodle' thing does not work. They need to be thought-out, like complete little journeys within the track. That's the great thing about working with Fredrik Åkesson. He was patient with my explanations, because we all know his ability is absolutely off the charts, and he understood when I was asking him to avoid overplaying, unless there was a point where it called for something outrageous. It's like dramaturgically structuring the solo to start in one place – and I'm paraphrasing what Kirk Hammett said in *A Year And A Half In The Life Of Metallica* where he noted, 'You start over here and then you take them to this other place and then you go to a third place that's even higher!' I told Fredrik I wanted to have a Kee Marcello approach to these leads. He was graceful enough to take direction."

In the following track-by-track guide, Tobias reveals the secrets behind his creation of *Impera* – from a song that started life as a picking exercise, much like Guns N' Roses' classic *Sweet Child O' Mine*, to second-guessing what Slayer and Missy Elliott might sound like in the studio together...

"I'M JUST ABOUT AN ABLE GUITAR PLAYER - I PEAKED A LONG TIME AGO!"

Imperium
It was meant almost like a national theme to this empire. It's a very bombastic and grandiose start to the album. At some point I want to re-record this song with a full orchestra and choir, almost like a classical version. And though it's a pretty simple melody and chord progression, it sounds really big because of all the harmonies. In the final mix, we actually took the harmonies down compared to the demo – they were even louder there!

Kaisarion
The funny thing is that I originally wrote the intro as a simple picking thing. At first I was using the open frets and then we reinterpreted it higher up the neck as more of a lead guitar thing, which is why it sounds like it does. It suddenly became so much more difficult and sounded difficult, which therefore made it more metal and cool! I think the reaction to the song has been good so far but once people have heard the record and know the song it will make more sense. We've done this weird thing before where we start a tour pre-album and open the set with the first track and people are like deer in the headlights! But it's fine, and a good opener!

Spillways
I can proudly say ABBA are one of my favourite bands of all time. As a songwriter, I'll always feel like I'm in the absolute shadow of their legacy because it's hard to find such enormous talent and impeccably fine-tuned songwriting. They've been an influence on our songs in general, maybe this one in particular. To make things extra nerdy, we recorded this album in Atlantis Studio in Stockholm, which is the old Metronome Studio – where ABBA recorded most of their hits. There's a video on YouTube of them making *Dancing Queen* and it's the exact same outboard gear, mixing console, microphones, marimba and piano we had around us. You'd play the piano and it would sound exactly the same as it did on *Money, Money, Money*, or try the marimba and it would sound like *Mamma Mia*. As an ABBA fan, being there was so wonderful. And our third album, *Meliora*, was recorded in Benny Andersson's own studio, which is where they made the new ABBA record. It's weird how some of our albums seem to follow their footsteps, but with that album we recorded somewhere before they did!

Call Me Little Sunshine
I like to use open strings and clashing notes in my riffs. I came up with this one in my head, just like I did with *Cirice* [from *Meliora*], and hummed it into my phone. Then I make sense of it using a guitar and try to find the most effective way of playing it. This one is kinda special because you have to fret the fifth fret on the lowest string first, and then the next string played open, for the first two notes. I chose to do that instead of hitting the same string twice. Basically, I'm trying to create more problems out of something simple in order to find the ultimate riff! I also did something similar with our song *Majesty* [also from *Meliora*]. The opening melody came first, which sounded very ABBA – and then I came up with the chords underneath. It's like working backwards, a bit like writing a good detective novel. You never start at the beginning, you start with the finish so that you know that the payoff and end is worth it. You start with the murder and go back from there.

Hunter's Moon
This song has a nostalgic, sad and almost romantic kind of feel where it's unclear whether the narrator is a protagonist or an antagonist. With lyrics like, 'It's been a long time coming, I'm coming back for you', it's sort of inviting but also threatening. I wanted the guitar and synth leads at the end of each chorus to symbolise this moment of insanity – a bit like the theme music in *Kill Bill* when Uma Thurman gets angry, it's this alarming sound that's a symbol for when she loses it. So I came up with that part to signal this is where madness kicks in, with all those guitars going through old synth pedals plus actual synths as well.

Watcher In The Sky
There were a few things we added on this record to enhance the drum kit. We've never had double bass drum before, so this song was the first we've made with a big kit. The double bass allowed for that Vinnie Paul [of Pantera] thing where there are triplet-feel things on the kick drum. Nothing against Pantera, but what influenced me there was actually a track called *Blood Ritual* by [Swiss extreme metal band] Samael, which had that feel I wanted to tap into.

Dominion
If you listen to the vinyl record, *Dominion* will be the first track on side B. It gives you a sense of break and rest for the ears. I wanted it to feel like a re-introduction for the new side. And even if you are listening to a CD or stream version, a break like this is often needed in order to segue between two contrasting points.

Twenties
When we were working on this song,

"I ALWAYS WANT SOLOS TO FEEL LIKE THEIR OWN LITTLE COMPOSITION"

HOLY GHOST
Tobias Forge in character under his new alias of Papa Emeritus IV

I kept imagining: 'What would Slayer and Missy Elliott sound like doing a song together?' That's how I wanted it to come out. Sometimes it can be a dreaded term in rock and metal, but this had modern pop qualities I wanted to explore… just to see if it would be doable. And I think we succeeded. It's a very aggressive song with very thrashy guitar playing and very evil lyrics about doing evil things. I always try to write songs I haven't heard or at least that we don't have. And this song felt like exactly that.

Darkness At The Heart Of My Love

It's the ballad of the record. As with most things Ghost, if it sounds pretty, the lyrics will be extra nasty. Honestly, we struggled with the writing a little. The original idea was the chorus, which I tried out in various forms. For some time it was sped-up in another track that doesn't exist anymore. As an experiment, we decided to slow the chorus down and build the song around it. It went through quite a few versions – one was even just an acoustic version, with five or so guitars for this Jeff Lynne wall of acoustics. Then it ended up being a metal version, which was harder and heavier. So it really morphed itself along the way, especially compared to tracks like *Twenties* – if you heard the first sketch I made for that song, it would be pretty close to the end result. This one took on new qualities. It got written and rewritten and rewritten again and again, continually getting altered. But it turned out cool! If we ever play it, I'd definitely like to see if we could execute it the acoustic way, because I feel that was also a really interesting version of it.

Grift Wood

What made the song for me was the fact that there's this crazy breakdown in what's otherwise a Sunset Strip kind of thing, which I see as more Van Halen than Ratt. It goes from this 80s homage to a completely different kind of rock. That's what makes it unique and different, though I'm sure there were a lot of songs that came out of the Sunset Strip in the 80s about the same subject! It felt like a good way of paying tribute while also doing something different, almost Tarantino-ing old things into something new.

Bite Of Passage

This piece ties into the album closer, which was actually written on piano. I've done that before on tracks like *Deus In Absentia*. I always try to find a good closing scene, I guess.

Respite On The Spitalfields

I find writing on the piano can make a song end up sounding a certain way. This was definitely one of my favourites while making this record. I feel like it's the most interesting song. My favourite part of the whole record is actually the solo after the first chorus, where we go up half a step. It's the best bit and only 25 seconds long! As much as there's a victorious feeling when you squeeze in a three-minute banger at the end, it's nice to have a seven-minute freeform track that doesn't take any commercial appeal into consideration. It lends to a certain freedom, which is why it came out that way, and eventually closes with the same theme from the opening track.

"THERE ARE A LOT OF BRIAN MAY-STYLE PARTS"

Opeth guitarist **Fredrik Åkesson** discusses his role on the new Ghost album

Fredrik Åkesson was initially hired to perform a handful of lead parts on Ghost's *Impera*, but the Opeth guitarist quickly ended up tracking all of the guitars on the album, as well as being left in charge of the re-amping. He describes the experience as the most intensely layered production he's ever worked on – likening Tobias Forge and producer Klas Åhlund to one of the greatest producers of them all, Mutt Lange, who famously orchestrated the multi-million selling classic *Hysteria* with Def Leppard one piece at a time.

A vast amount of gear used was across the 12 tracks on *Impera*, but the majority of the rhythm tones were created using four guitars, three amps and a handful of pedals. As Fredrik tells TG: "There was an Explorer going through my Olsson Little Hill 100-watt – an amp I helped design and which we used on the last Opeth album – a Strat and a Les Paul through my Friedman BE-100, then a Flying V going through Tobias' Mesa/Boogie Mark IIC+ with an MLC Vanilla Sky pedal in front. There were actually quite a few different Strats with us, like my 1970 model that I bought from John Norum, Tobias' 70s Strat which you hear during the intro for *Call Me Little Sunshine* and another mid-80s Fender. We also used the MXR Sugar Drive a lot, which has a Klon-style circuit."

For the solos, Fredrik took advantage of some late 50s Marshall Plexis that belonged to the studio, with an old Yngwie Malmsteen favourite in front for extra scream. It's a classic sound that, to his ears among countless others, has stood the test of time. "There are a lot of Brian May-style parts on this album, with four-piece harmonies dubbed three times each plus octaves," he says. "I'd never recorded so many layers of guitars... It was fun! For most of the solos I borrowed an old DOD Preamp 250, made in the 70s. It's the same pedal Yngwie Malmsteen used with his Plexis back in the day on his early albums. It sounded great – such a warm and saturated lead tone!"

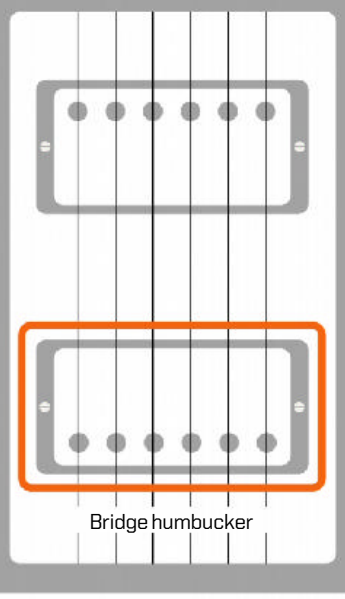
"I'D NEVER RECORDED SO MANY LAYERS OF GUITARS ON AN ALBUM. IT WAS FUN!"

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Hammer-ons and pull-offs
- ✔ Powerchords
- ✔ D standard tuning

RIFF OF THE MONTH

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



We suspect this rhythm part was multi-tracked with a mix of Åkesson's Explorer, Les Paul, Stratocaster and Flying V guitars through Olsson, Friedman and Mesa/Boogie amps – and, with so much going on, that means you can only expect to dial in a rough ballpark tone. Use a bridge humbucker and opt for a Brit style drive tone akin to Marshall or Orange. Be sure to use a moderate amount of gain for a classic metal tone, rather than a saturated modern sound.

GHOST

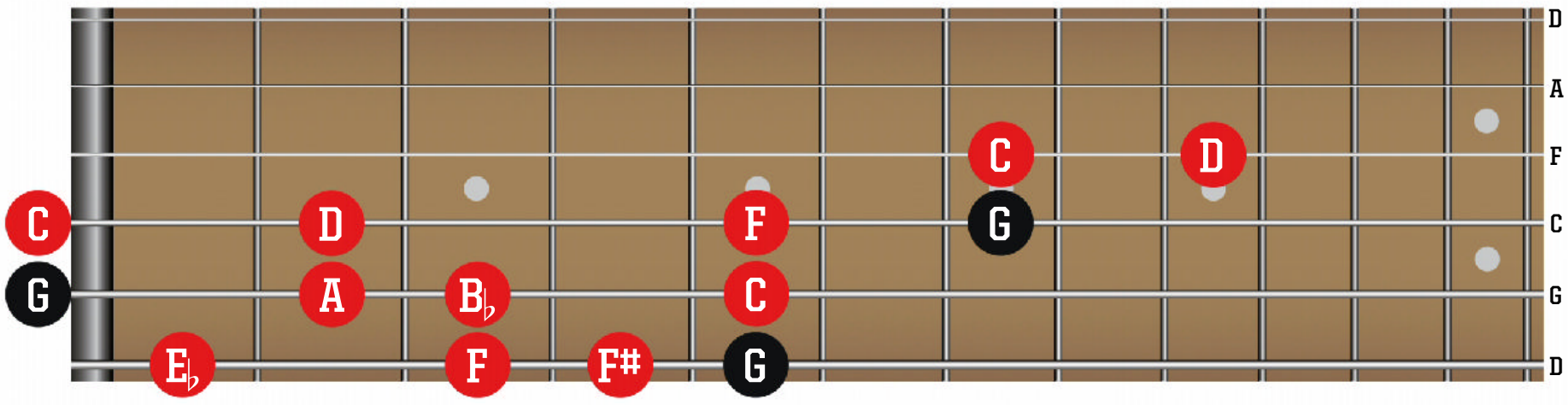
Call Me Little Sunshine

This month we're looking at the main riff in Ghost's *Call Me Little Sunshine*. The Tobias Forge-penned G minor riff is delivered by Opeth's Fredrik Åkesson, who tunes down to D standard (DGCFAD here).

We'll focus our attention on the part that begins at 0:24 where the sweet clean tones of the intro give way to a heavier overdriven pre-verse section. The two parts are similar, essentially outlining the same melody, but with the typical palm-muted chug of powerchords once the distortion kicks in.

For instance, whereas the intro kicks off with a pair of lush ringing G notes, in the heavier pre-verse, two chunky palm-muted G5 chords begin proceedings. You'll also hear open third and fourth strings ringing out in the intro; those same two notes are fretted in the pre-verse, giving a weighty, riffier vibe.

Follow our slowed down performance in the video for a clearer idea of how this riff is played.



This riff primarily uses the G natural minor scale (G A B♭ C D E♭ F). As the guitar is tuned down a tone to D standard, the fretboard note names are offset by two frets. Rather than an obvious scale shape, the riff jumps around the neck from open strings up to the 9th fret, so a good start is to plot the G root notes and identify the scale names around them. Notice that there is one non-diatonic note on the sixth string, F#, which briefly hints at the G harmonic minor scale and adds some exotic interest to the riff.

Photo Getty

Words Grant Moon **Photos** Jackie Lee Young

"IT'S HYPNOTISING!"

How the funky, reverb-heavy sound of **Khruangbin** is created – by a visionary with only one guitar

Mark Speer, guitarist for Texas trio Khruangbin, exhales smoke with a satisfied smile as he ponders the meaning of psychedelic music. "People talk to me like I'm some psych-rock aficionado," he says. "But our 'psychedelic' stuff comes from my deep, deep interest in dub reggae. Western ears hear the echoes and all the reverbs in dub and call it psychedelic, because we're used to placing these components into that context. But it was never intended that way. Dub's actually meant to be played underneath a Jamaican DJ chatting upon these rhythms, which are crazy sounds to keep the audience engaged when they're drinking beer and smoking joints. It's not really an LSD love-in."

Khruangbin are not like other bands, and Speer is not like other guitarists. For a start, he has only one guitar, a 2001 US Fender Classic Series Strat. He has minimal interest in flashy solos, and his core heroes are old masters, far removed from rock orthodoxy. Among them are Noel 'Sowell' Radics from legendary Jamaican band Roots Radics, Jacob Desvarieux from Guadeloupean zouk pioneers Kassav, and ska innovator Ernest Ranglin, widely credited with popularising the 2- and 4-beat chord accents that power that music's signature skank.

So if the music of legendary fellow Texan Stevie Ray Vaughan is not for Speer, what about his fellow Houstonian, Billy Gibbons? He lights up: "I love Billy Gibbons! ZZ Top rules! That record *Eliminator*, with *Sharp Dressed Man* and *Got Me Under Pressure*, it's killer – because it's got electronic drums and pounding bass. It's like nothing else. The earlier stuff was just blues-rock, but by the 1980s they reinvented a genre. That album is amazing – I will die on that hill!"

As for Speer's own little old band from Texas, a whole melting pot of influences goes into the hypnotic, globalista sound of Khruangbin (the name means 'aeroplane' in Thai). Formed by Speer, bassist Laura Lee and drummer Donald 'DJ' Johnson around 2011, the trio jammed in the Speer family barn, and were soon opening for artists including Bonobo and Massive Attack. Their 2015 debut LP *The Universe Smiles Upon You* introduced the wider world to their spacious, reverb-soaked instrumental cosmos, a place underpinned by Johnson's spare, irresistible grooves, Lee's clever bass and lulling vocal refrains and Speer's tasteful, worldly guitar and liquid-gold tone. More acclaimed LPs followed – 2018's *Con Todo El Mundo*, 2019's *Hasta El Cielo* and the brilliant *Mordechai* in 2020. That year they also released *Texas Sun*, their EP with Grammy-winning Texan soul singer Leon Bridges.

"We opened for Leon back in 2018," Speer says. "On that tour I'd go find a record store about a mile from the venue and buy as many 45s [vinyl singles] as I could, then backstage we had two portable record players, and we'd have little DJ sessions with these 7-inch singles. That's where we really started vibing with Leon – hanging out, playing music, shooting the sh*t."

The vibing inevitably led to music. The title track from *Texas Sun* was a Top 20 Rock Chart hit in the States, with over 100m Spotify hits to date. Now on the follow-up, *Texas Moon*, the trio's eclectic sound palette continues to show Bridges' smooth vocals in a new light, while he brings a neo-soul vibe to Khruangbin's dreamlike and – to the rest of us – psychedelic offering.

Opening with the haunting *Doris*, *Texas Moon* magpies elements from Afrobeat (the utterly irresistible guitar hook in *B-Side*), D'Angelo-style neo-soul (the groovy *Chocolate Hills*, the brooding *Father Father*), and, in the yearning *Mariella*, some dusty Texan vibes too .

"At the end of one of the sessions," Speer recalls, "Leon was sitting on the edge of the couch, holding a guitar and singing songs that never made it onto his records, and I *so* got those bits, especially *Chocolate Hills*. It was just his vocal and two guitar chords, and I could hear where it should be going. I started making an arrangement with drums and bass – I never start with guitar, that was the last thing to go on. I'm a huge fan of [80s RnB group] Mtume – and my guitar part there's actually a homage to [their 1983 hit] *Juicy Fruit*."

For *Father Father*, Speer was so captivated by Bridges' main melody he suggested they "just ride on this for the entire time, make it really hypnotic. I learned that from [Parliament/Funkadelic legend] George Clinton – you just play it over and over the same way until it's hypnotising. I've met all kinds of musicians who can't or won't play the same thing for six minutes – they have to change, add more notes or solo, or they go crazy. But don't come at me asking for non-hypnotic stuff! Other people do that way better than me and it's not my bag. I'm gonna just stay hypnotic."

Speer is 42 now. As a kid growing up in he taught himself to play guitar, and later he'd vamp for hours on end with his church band, where he met bandmate Johnson. Into the 2000s he'd take any session gig he could to make rent – with gospel choirs, pickup bands in clubs, at 'hip-hop jazz' shows. He'd regularly do four-hour sets in Cajun joints with groups playing Zydeco, the lively accordion-led, brand of Creole dance music popular in East Texas and Louisiana.

As a listener, he'd head to record stores in Houston's Indian district and dig out albums by superstar singers Lata

"EMBRACE WHAT YOU CAN'T DO – WORK WITH THOSE LIMITATIONS"

"PEOPLE TELL ME I USE TOO MUCH REVERB, BUT I DO WHAT I DO"

Mangeshkar and MS Subbulakshmi. He fell for reggae, dub, the Afrobeat of Fela Kuti and Congolese guitarist Franco, and even had a brief dalliance with the prog of Gentle Giant, Soft Machine and the super-intense Eschaton. So when Khruangbin formed, he had a pretty unique approach.

Speer has unconventional means to get those uncommon tones. His sole Strat is fitted with DiMarzio Cruiser humbuckers in the neck and bridge, with TUSQ polymer bridge saddles/string trees adding tuning stability to the stock tremolo setup. He favours flatwound strings, but for playability ditches the low E (.042) and substitutes it with the A (.032), then the D for the A, and so on, using a .010 for both the B and high E.

With much of his volume/tone management done by judicious use of the pots on his Strat, Speer's modest pedalboard includes a Boss DS-1 Distortion, Boss PH-3 Phaser and Strymon El Capistan echo. An expression pedal controls the Strymon's repeats, from one-off slapback to long, dubby walls of echo. His Cry Baby wah-wah is such an intrinsic part of his shimmering sound that it's never turned off. "I started doing that in the mid-2000s," he says, "when I got really into King Crimson and Santana. With the DS1 all the way up and the tone [and distortion] off, I'd put on the neck or the bridge of the Strat, then park the wah [in the sweet spot]. I was trying to do these really long, sustained sheets of sound, that kind of Coltrane-esque approach – more like a synth or wind instrument, less than a guitar."

This all goes to a Fender Deluxe Reverb amp, but not before passing through another essential bit of kit: "I always use the Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail reverb pedal, on the spring setting. In the studio, we double that up with a real spring reverb on there. My love of reverb comes from my love for the sitar and the rebab, its African cousin. Some people tell me I use too much reverb, but I do what I do."

In with the funky, world music-inspired lines, Speer favours tasty, jazzy chord voicings, with partial-chord licks adding extra interest. "I love chords, dude!" he says. "I've learned how to do three-note chord melody stuff on the top three strings. At this point it's an intuitive thing. I don't need to worry about the root, LL [bassist Lee] has got that covered. But I also want to learn how to make the chord sound tough. Take gospel music – a lot of times the chord might be major, but the choir's singing something that's not in that major scale, but it sure sounds good.

SOUL CONNECTION
(Left to right) Donald 'DJ' Johnson, Leon Bridges, Mark Speer, Laura Lee

Then, as soon as you add that [flat] seven to, say, a D major chord, it sounds like it wants to go back to G, right? But could just stay right there [on the D] forever. Then you gotta learn how to embellish that."

With the trademark reverb an aural glue for Khruangbin's sparse sound, Speer has a gift for sitting in Johnson and Lee's groove, adding just the right adornments, letting the music hang. His advice for a guitarist playing in a three-piece echoes that of the all-time great trio players, from Andy Summers to Eric Clapton. "Don't be afraid of space," he says. "You can spend your time either filling up every section of the sonic void, or you can embrace that space. In our early stuff it was pretty much just bass on the bottom, a cracking drum break then me playing on the top, and nothing in the middle. And that's kind of counterintuitive to a lot of people – 'You should get a keyboard player to fill up that middle!' No – because then we're gonna sound like everybody else! It was that space that made us sound like us. The three of you can go into the studio and layer everything, but then what's gonna happen when you play live? Embrace what you *can't* do – work *with* those limitations..."

***Texas Moon* is out now on Dead Oceans.**

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Words Ellie Rogers **Photos** Jimmy Fontaine

"EVERYTHING IS ON 11!"

Halestorm have pumped up the volume on their new album. And for leader Lzzy Hale, being a role model is "a beautiful thing"

Over the past decade, Halestorm have earned themselves a reputation as one of the hardest working rock bands on the planet, often performing as many as 250 live shows a year. Like most musicians, they had a tough time adjusting to an enforced life off the road, and guitarist/vocalist Lzzy Hale has described how she, in particular, "fell into a dark place and something of an identity crisis," during the long, gigless months of lockdown.

Throughout these potentially fallow times, however, some major milestones were reached – most notably with Lzzy being officially inducted into the Gibson family as its first female Brand Ambassador back in July of 2021. Now, with the promise of a new signature guitar on the horizon, Lzzy is happy to be back on the road to promote Halestorm's fifth studio album – the aptly titled *Back From The Dead*.

During a pre-soundcheck break on their UK tour, Lzzy and the band's other guitarist Joe Hottinger are in buoyant mood as they talk about what it means to be on stage again.

"We're playing shows like they're going to be stolen from us," Lzzy says, "and I think everyone's coming to shows like it's going to be their last. So, everything is on 11!"

"It's just four of us making noise on stage," adds Joe, "and we just go off. We don't know when it's going to end or where it's going to land. You just kind of see what happens. That's living!"

It's clear they've really missed it. Likewise, the transformative, life-affirming power of rock 'n' roll is the dominant theme that runs throughout the new album – right from the defiantly screamed opening lyrics of its title track, through to the triumphant, 'lighters aloft' album closer, *Raise Your Horns*. Rather than shrinking in the face of uncertain times, Halestorm have emerged stronger and louder than ever before.

"It came together as probably one of our most cohesive albums," Lzzy says.

"And I think that's because this particular collection of songs were the ones that were being written in the now. There wasn't anything pre-Covid – it was all just whatever was happening to us at that moment, and whatever we were passionate about."

The title track, *Back From The Dead*, not only set the tone for the creative process, but also serves as a mission statement for the whole album. "You have to almost be circling around a certain subject and certain feel," explains Lzzy, "and you write three or four different songs with that same thing in mind – and maybe they don't hit – then all of sudden it figures itself out, and all of the pieces of the puzzle are there."

As Joe puts it, "Everything that we wrote kind of built up until *Back From The Dead* happened. Then it just all fell out."

The band recorded the album in Nashville and Los Angeles, working with longtime collaborators Scott Stevens and producer Nick Raskulinecz, and they weren't short of guitars to experiment with and be inspired by. Says Joe, "Between the two of us, we brought about sixty guitars to the studio. Nick had twenty or thirty sitting around, so we had about a hundred guitars all out."

Joe also brought along his two vintage Marshall amps, and got to borrow from the "sh*t-ton of really cool amps" that Raskulinecz had in the studio. He explains: "For the main guitar sounds, we ended up recording two amps at the same time. It was usually my red 1971 Marshall Plexi, which is just so loud and obnoxious, and we'd mix that with either a Diezel VH4 or this 1987 Soldano 100 watt amp that sounded amazing."

Lzzy interjects: "Don't forget about the pile of pedals on the floor. It wasn't even organised – it was just chaos!"

Asked if they discovered many new tones among all the gear that was literally laying at their feet, she recalls, "I think in a lot of these moments, you know the sound that you're going for, but you have all of these options for getting there. Thankfully, Nick was there to be like, 'Let's combine the Soldano with the Marshall. Let's try that green SG,.' It was a fun project because there were just so many toys."

"IT'S IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG GIRLS TO SEE THEMSELVES IN SOMEBODY LIKE ME"

LZZY HALE

This being said, the pair didn't stray too far from their tried and tested favourite guitar models, with Gibson Explorers for Lzzy and Gibson SGs for Joe featuring heavily throughout. Added to the mix were also baritones for the riff-heavy material, as well as two of Gibson's 1958 Korina reissue models. "They sound really great together," Lzzy says. "So when I'm playing the Korina Explorer and Joe's playing the Korina V, his is super light and kind of chimey, and mine is really meaty, mid-range and darker. The combination is really cool."

A Les Paul was used for the ominously dark tones heard in the opening moments of *Bombshell* – after what initially seemed like an unfortunate run-in with an overzealous guitar tech came good. As Joe recalls, "We had this tech who over-tightened this vintage Les Paul tuning knob, and it just broke when I was tuning-up the high E string. I had it plugged into an amp and the high E string just went totally slack. I kind of bumped it and started playing the riff. That's why it sounds so slinky – it's literally a high E string tuned down about three octaves. It was flopping just over the pickup and going through a heavy amp – it just sounded so frickin' heavy, even on the tiniest string!"

On finding this unexpected gem of a tone, he explains, "When you're in the studio, you're already tuned-in. You're listening all the time. So when something happens, you are prepared to accept it and you can hear what the final outcome could be."

The common thread that runs through the impressive inventory of guitars we hear on *Back From The Dead* is, of course, the Gibson name. It's no secret that, since the very beginning, both Hale and Hottinger have been utterly enamoured with the brand and its absolute synonymy with rock 'n' roll cool. Says Lzzy: "It's the uniform that you want when you first start playing the instrument: you want a Gibson, you want a Marshall. You want meat and potatoes – those staples that you saw all of your idols slinging."

It is, then, something of a dream come true for Lzzy to have been welcomed officially into the Gibson fold as the brand's first ever female ambassador. She'd been approached by other would-be collaborators over the years, but always turned them down in the hope of landing the biggest fish of all. She laughs: "They were the ones I was waiting to ask me to the prom!"

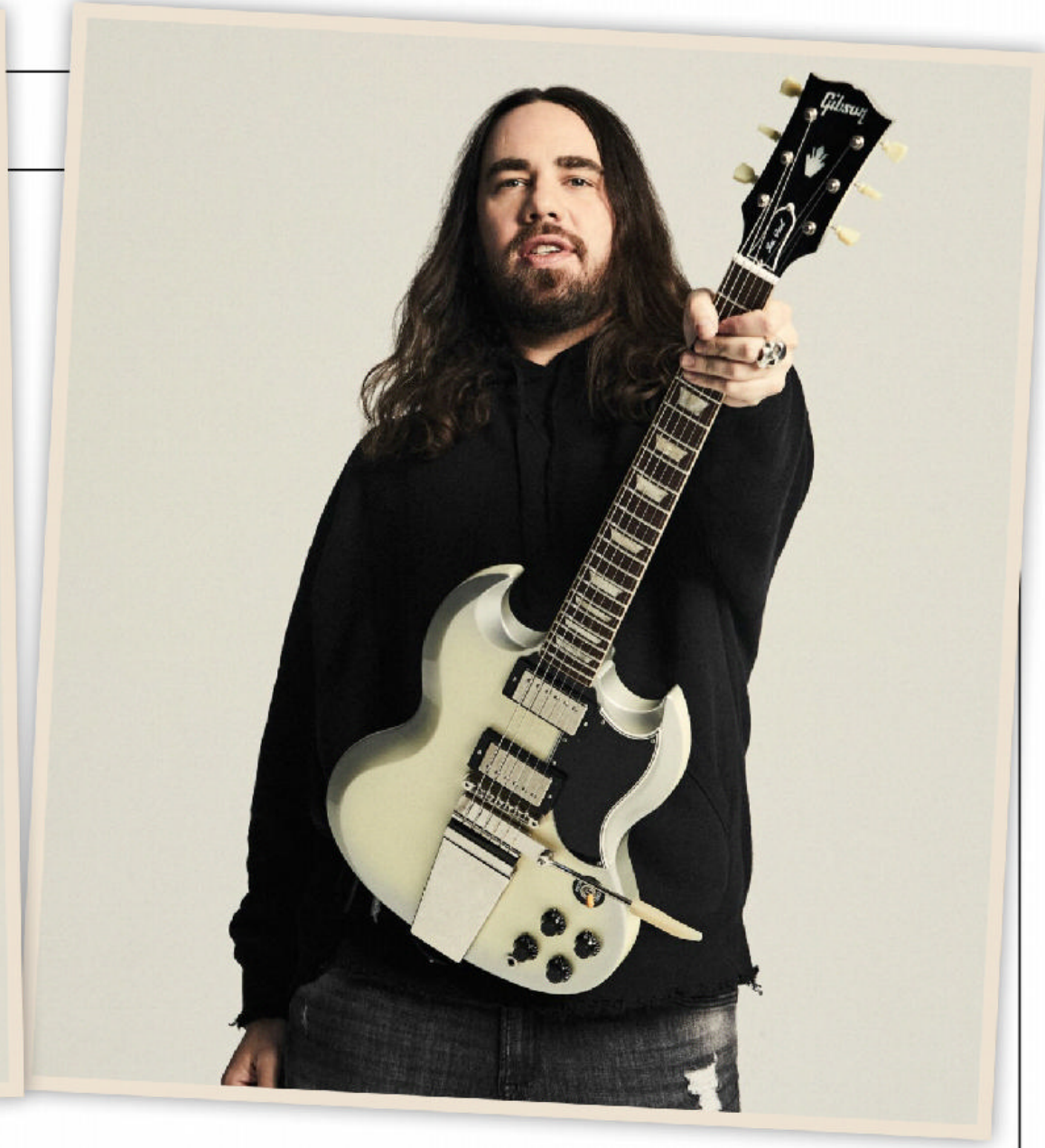
Even before her ambassadorship, Lzzy worked with Gibson luthiers to design the Gibson Lzzy Hale Explorer – which comes in alpine white – and what she calls its "evil twin", the Gibson Lzzy Hale Dark Explorer, as well as her more bank account-friendly signature Epiphone Explorer. On working with the guitar giants, she explains, "You always hope that maybe one day you'll be able to design a guitar and put out something with your name on it. So, now that it's become a part of my life, it blows my mind every time – especially with the wonderful people at Gibson."

I'M WITH THE BRAND

"You always hope that you'll be able to design a guitar with your name on it," Lzzy says

The partnership, which indicates a long overdue shift towards female representation in gear, has also spawned Lzzy's latest Gibson signature model: the Explorer Bird – a guitar that she promises will be "a different animal altogether". As its name suggests, the Explorer Bird – which Lzzy and Joe also refer to affectionately as "the Lzzy Bird" – is a hybrid guitar, which places a Gibson Firebird headstock on an Explorer body. The idea, laughs Lzzy, "was one of those hare-brained schemes" that tend to come about when she and Gibson's Brand President, Cesar Gueikian, get together in a room.

She recalls: "I think it was at the NAMM right before lockdown – we were doing some projects with Gibson – and



I mentioned offhandedly that it would be cool to have a Firebird headstock on an Explorer body. Then Cesar was like, 'If you were to do something like that, what colour do you think it should be?'" At that point, Lzzy knew he was up to something.

The guitar, which is due to be revealed officially at this year's NAMM Show, will sport a red and black finish, with gold hardware and a pair of 1970s humbuckers – a divergence from Lzzy's original signature Explorers, which feature Gibson '57 Classic humbuckers.

The original prototype of the Explorer Bird already features in Lzzy's arsenal, and it offers some interesting advantages in playability. "Actually," she reveals, "I'm playing it in drop C right now for both *Back From The Dead* and our latest single *The Steeple*, because it just handles those low tunings really well. I don't know if it has something to do with the headstock – but probably. It sounds really mean."

As well as offering Lzzy the chance to work with Gibson on new designs, the ambassadorship also enables her to work on philanthropic endeavours and youth-focused education. "As an ambassador," she says, "you're taking this brand and you're literally bringing it into people's lives, regardless of their walk of life."

Although she's long been seen as a symbol of empowerment for young women in rock, her role with Gibson somehow makes it all the more 'official'. "It's interesting," she explains, "being the first female ambassador doing it because I feel like every time I get one of those titles – the first this or that – you're the first through the door, and you're a placeholder for whoever comes after you. You get to help normalise that as a female.

She adds proudly: "The most beautiful thing about what I do now with Gibson is that you get to put yourself up there in a way that, for the generation of young girls that want to get into this instrument, makes the bridge to that dream just a little bit shorter – just like when I was younger and saw Joan Jett playing guitar, or Lita Ford or Nancy Wilson."

Lzzy's personality as a natural trailblazer, who has already led Halestorm to Grammy award-winning levels of success, stands her in good stead for continuing to pave the way for young artists by breaking down barriers and leading by example. She explains: "It's important for young girls to see themselves in somebody like me, instead of thinking that they're all by themselves, trying to make the dream happen."

HEAVY FRIENDS
Lzzy and Joe. "The combination," she says, "is really cool"

Although progress towards female representation in the guitar industry has felt painfully slow at times, there is at long last a rapidly gathering momentum, and with players like Lzzy leading the charge from inside one of the world's most renowned guitar brands, it can only grow and grow. As a final thought on the subject, Lzzy reflects on how far things have come since she first started out in the industry.

"Everybody is becoming a little bit more awake and a little bit more aware," she says, "and it's a testament, not just to the female guitar players and female musicians, but to the tour managers, the lighting technicians and the producers. All of these women have just been like, 'Hey! I'm here and I'm really good at what I do, and it has nothing to do with what's between my legs!' The fact that we've been really loud about that for a long time, means, I think, that the next generation is going to have a little bit of an easier time, and that's really cool."

"YOU WANT A GIBSON, YOU WANT A MARSHALL – THOSE STAPLES THAT YOU SAW YOUR IDOLS SLINGING" LZZY HALE

Words Jonathan Horsley

"I JUST GET LOST IN STRUMMING THE GUITAR"

From inside his home studio, **Kurt Vile** reveals his working methods. Writing songs, playing guitar – it's all about capturing a "perfect moment"

One of the most cruel misfortunes to befall musicians of any stripe is when the memory fails just as their inspiration and abilities converge at the summit of their creative Kilimanjaro. Our best ideas often the most perishable, first to evaporate if we don't document them, get them down on tape.

Kurt Vile is alive to the danger. He takes every precaution, booby-trapping his home studio with recording devices to ensure those song ideas get committed to something more reliable than the grey matter. The ideas might not seem like much in the moment, but that's okay – because sometimes there's gold right there, just waiting to be extracted.

"You just lay stuff down really fast with some keys, guitar, or whatever you have, and you'd be surprised," he explains, speaking from his home studio, OKV Central. "Because what you are trying to do when you are writing a song, with vocals, lyrics and guitar, is to not think at all. Just lay it down fast. Like Sun Ra, he recorded everything, rehearsals and whatnot. That's what a looper is there for, just for laying something down fast, and you will be surprised that, just because you were walking by, playing music, it captures it, and you have this whole song you didn't otherwise have."

His recording career was built on such moments. When he was a member of The War On Drugs – the band he co-founded with Adam Granduciel – Kurt was already establishing an alternative canon with a DIY production style, squirrelling songs away on CD-Rs. His setup was rudimentary but has since evolved. There's been personal growth – parenthood, hitting his forties, actually becoming a pretty big deal, producing the latest Dinosaur Jr album, *Sweep It Into Space* – but his ethos and multi-instrumentalist approach has not changed too much. One thing Kurt has learned over the years is that you can't possibly have too many recording devices. Use tape recorders, Zoom multi-track field recorders, whatever comes to hand, and especially the looper pedal because that can be the most valuable of them all, allowing you to record without giving a second thought to the red light. Without, as he says, thinking at all, which is how much of his new album, *(Watch My Moves)*, was written.

"I have several generations of those Boss loopers and there is lots of stuff on this record alone where I just treat it like a tape machine, like a recorder without a loop but then it ends up looping anyway," he says. "I learned that on this album, recording constantly and then going back to them. I used to not do that. I would show up in the studio and then start from scratch. But these are different times."

Kurt has an unconsciously disguised professionalism. He doesn't seem the ruthlessly efficient type when he talks to TG over Zoom, dressed in a flannel shirt and a Willie Nelson & Family trucker hat, with an easy-going demeanour that suggests he is rarely unmoored from a sense of equilibrium. But *(Watch My Moves)* is a considerable body of work that can only be the product of a certain brand of efficiency and discipline, and perhaps even faith, too. Faith in the sense of letting the imagination out to forage and trust what it'll bring back, a form of quasi-automatic writing that holds song ideas in suspension, as though in a dream.

"Yeah, I like to just get lost in strumming the guitar," he says. "Like the line on *Flyin' (In A Fast Train)*, 'Playing in the music room in my underwear…', at that moment, I literally was!" The memory makes him chuckle. Then it gets serious. How do you finish a track like that, a gentle song, a loose-leaf Americana hip-hop vibe? The risk is that it gets overworked and tightens up. "When I was trying to get the song recorded, my family went away, it was like the first summer of the pandemic," he says. "I stayed, like, 'I gotta get to know this Marantz four-track!' I just had this Uni-Vox drum machine, and I sped it up, because I had it down a little too slow, and the next thing you know I am just sitting and strumming.

"It's kinda funny because you said it was like Americana hip-hop, and strangely enough, the pop star Kei$ha asked me to help her write some songs. I was flattered! Like, 'Really?'

"IN A FULL-ON SESSION, THERE'S A PEAK MOMENT WHERE YOU FINALLY GET DOWN AND REALLY LET LOOSE"

WATCH MY MOVES
Kurt (right) with video director Sean Dunne. "This was taken on the *Flyin (Like A Fast Train)* video shoot," Kurt says. "This is the Martin 12-string acoustic used on the *Flyin* recording and *Cool Water*."

Photo Cass Greener

At the time, I was listening to some of her music, and the way she delivers fast it is kind of hip-hop. I was trying to make it poppy but it came out through me with a Martin acoustic 12-string I got recently, and floaty vocals, just captured at that right time when the song was fully written. I just walked around the block – it was literally all you could do – and the next thing you know the sun went down and I was home alone, feeling pretty good about myself, like in outer space. I think all that's captured in that song."

Mount Airy Hill (Way Gone) was another song that arrived unannounced. Within minutes, he had the lyrics and was singing it over the arpeggiator on a Yamaha organ. The task, again, was to record it, and put flesh on the arrangements. That's when his band, the Violators, came in and the opportunity arose to put slide guitar over it, using his old Rodeo electric with the gold-foil pickups – the one from the cover of his 2008 debut *Constant Hitmaker*. "I can't remember if I tried slide on something else first but it just really sung on that thing," he says. "It's really beat-up but those gold-foil pickups just have this special sound. That's the secret to my early sound. I just rehearsed again with a couple of the bandmates, and at first I was trying to play that slide part on a Jazzmaster or something, and sure enough, I was like, 'Hand me that Rodeo!'"

Mount Airy Hill (Way Gone) is of special significance. That's a hometown song. Kurt took off the headphones to track his vocals and organ, "trying to just ignore the technology" and to keep it as natural and low-key, as if he were just talking to a friend. His songwriting is deceptive like that. It's disarming, a stream of consciousness gathering observational data as it goes, wry asides, lyrics in a meter that help draw the instrumentation forward, everyday stuff, before it establishes a momentum, taking the scenic route to someplace profound.

The blend of the everyday and the profound establishes a dramatic tension. Songs such as *Going On A Plane Today* are like children's music for existentialists. Even the title of the album speaks to a sense that Kurt has retained the ability to look at the world as a child might, calling it as they see it without any filter. But if children lack the wisdom and emotional maturity to always make sense of their experiences, a forty-something adult at least stands a better chance.

"I really like my forties. I like them a lot," he says. "I sort of dreaded them, just the number, when I was in my late thirties. Even in the very earliest sessions on this record I wasn't even fully ready to record but I forced myself to go into the studio before I hit forty,

y'know! But now, I like my forties because I feel like, growing up, you've got a lot to prove, a lot to figure out. Now I can tap into it but I don't have so much to prove. What have I got to prove is what I have to prove; it's not such a contest any more. Not to say I am not competitive et cetera, it's just a little different."

Kurt recorded *(Watch My Moves)* over various sessions at OKV Central, and in Rob Schnapf's Mant Sounds, Los Angeles. Songs such as the Bruce Springsteen cover *Wages Of Sin* were performed and recorded live with the Violators in the studio. "I have heard this song a hundred times and I know I can nail it vocally, and then I can just improvise my guitar over it," he says. Others offered him the opportunity to bring a host of guests onboard, with Chastity Belt performing on the nostalgic acoustic folk of *Chazzy Don't Mind*, James Stewart of the Sun Ra Arkestra playing saxophone on *Goin' On A Plane Today* and the epic and trippy *Like Exploding Stones*, extra drums and percussion coming by way of Warpaint's Stella Mozgawa and Hot Chip's Sarah Jones, while Cate Le Bon joins him for a duet on *Jesus On A Wire*.

Kurt plays around with a lot of different styles and textures. At times his guitar playing recalls Ry Cooder, or even Mark Knopfler, but in context with synth and keys, these motifs serve a higher purpose. How Kurt presents his instrumentation has a similar effect on the audience as his lyrics. He can be direct and accessible, honest and humane, but there's a soft-focus to his sound, a gauzy texture to the production; *(Watch My Moves)* is like an audiophile's interpretation of lo-fi, designed to encourage the audience to lean into the arrangement and take from it what they want.

"That used to be what I was doing all the time with cheaper equipment and recording myself," he says. "I also came to the realisation that, one, you do it as live as possible, two, you clutter it up as little as possible, and three, you put as little reverb and delay on there that you used to think helped it, but a lot of times the vocals cut through if you keep it dry. You've still got to find the tone, and that's the beauty of playing in the moment. Like you pick up a guitar and you get lost in one chord."

LOST IN MUSIC
"You pick up a guitar and you get lost in one chord," Kurt says. "That's the beauty of playing in the moment."

Kurt pans his camera round and talks through some of his most important pieces of gear, like the Moog Matriarch that gets a shout-out on *Like Exploding Stones*, and an upright piano that's leaned against the wall behind him. "It is sometimes more spiritual than the guitar," he says. "Any time you go over to it you'll be sort of writing; it's all there in front of you." There were plenty of guitars in the mix, too. An old orange Gretsch – "I can't remember the number now, 6120? Whatever!" – that reminded Vile of Neil Young's *On The Beach* tone. "Once I picked that one up it was hard to put down, and it's just cool how you get to know instruments as you are getting to make the record," he says.

Schnapf's '65 Fender Jazzmaster, a big favourite of Kurt's, was most notably used for *Wages Of Sin*, its signal fed through an ADA Flanger, and maybe a Memory Man and a "dirtied-up" vintage Fender Deluxe. Vile is hazy on the details. "I am just shoegazing on that tremolo arm, just going down, downward into ground," he says. "If you want to get the straight, gnarlyish but warm, analogue sound, go through those ADA Flangers."

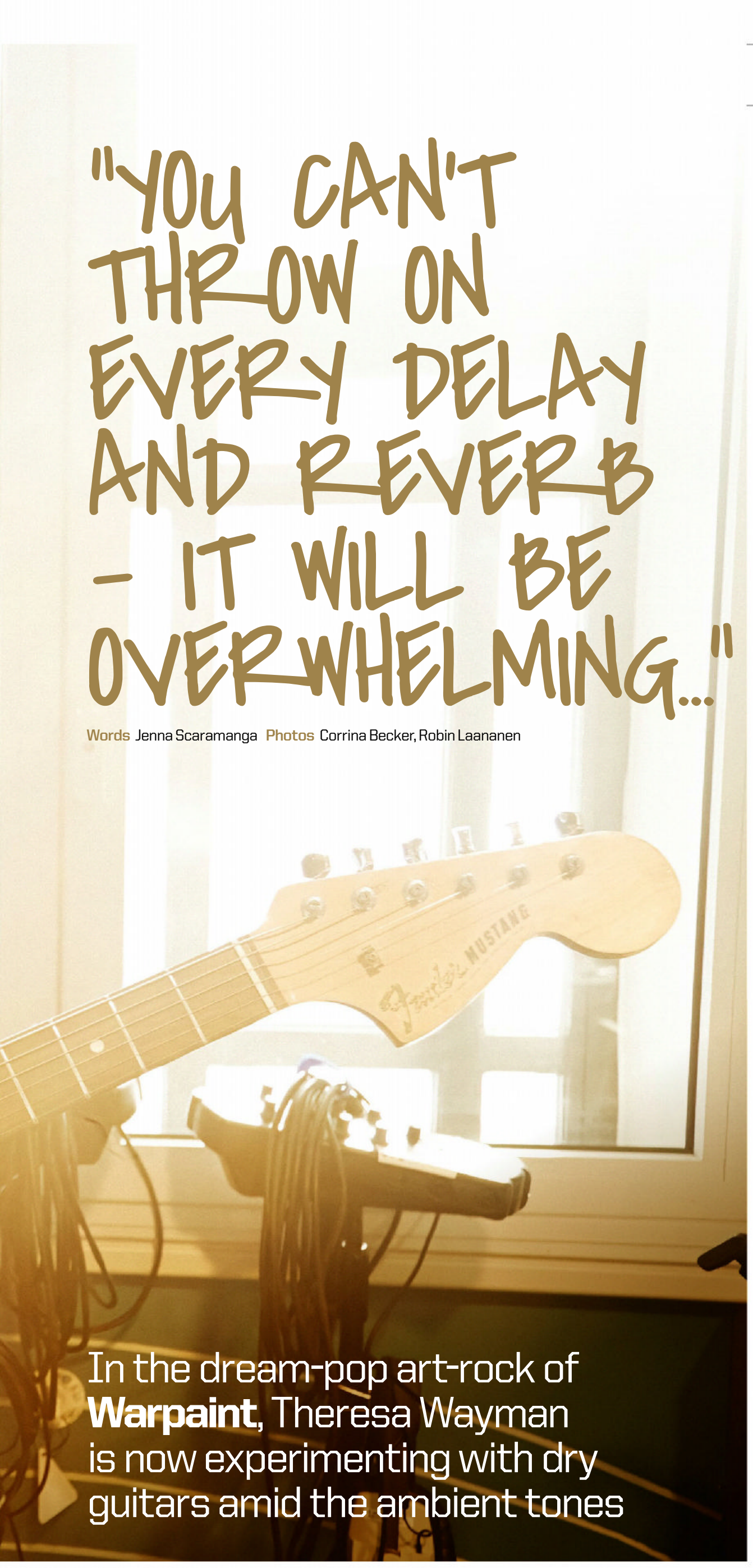
That's how it goes in the studio, he explains, when the writing is near done and the deadline pulls him forward, when the ill-formed blur of an album becomes clearer, when day turns to night and the band plays on, staying up late, and Kurt understands once more what it is all about, why he does this in the first place, creating something, making life momentarily transcendent.

"In a full-on session you are maybe up a little bit later than you would be normally, and things get fun and it gets otherworldly and psychedelic, and there's a peak moment in the songs, where you finally get down and really let loose," he says. "I feel like you wouldn't play like that otherwise. It's like a culmination of some moments, almost like being in outer space with your friends or something, a perfect moment, y'know?"

"WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO WHEN YOU ARE WRITING A SONG, WITH VOCALS AND GUITAR, IS TO NOT THINK AT ALL"

"YOU CAN'T THROW ON EVERY DELAY AND REVERB – IT WILL BE OVERWHELMING..."

Words Jenna Scaramanga Photos Corrina Becker, Robin Laananen



In the dream-pop art-rock of **Warpaint**, Theresa Wayman is now experimenting with dry guitars amid the ambient tones

When Warpaint convened in 2019, there was a plan. As guitarist Theresa Wayman recalls: "We were all anxious to record an album the way we used to when we were starting, together in the rehearsal space just writing and jamming and playing things over and over, really honing songs."

At first, this plan went swimmingly. In the earliest stages, the band set to work at drummer Stella Mozgawa's home studio. "The best moment was when we got together in the first stages of writing," Theresa says. "We all came in with some tracks we had started. We put those on and started learning them, bringing them to life. It was an ecstatic moment."

From there, they moved to a pro studio, Rancho De La Luna, in Joshua Tree, that fabled outpost in the California desert, where they were joined by producer Sam Petts-Davies. There was one track, *Trouble*, that was recorded with the whole band playing live. "There's something magical about that," Theresa says. But, she adds with a sigh: "The logistics always seem to step in."

'Logistics' in this case came from singer/guitarist Emily Kokal's pregnancy. Warpaint raced to finish the basic sessions before Kokal's daughter arrived. "There was a lot of emphasis on getting the bass and the drums recorded," Theresa says. "The basic structures of the songs, and saving the top line guitar and vocal stuff for later." And then: "The day Emily gave birth was the day LA shut down for the pandemic."

Theresa is audibly frustrated that the process couldn't have been further from the planned jamming. "We were all separated and this album became a very piecemeal, separated project." She tracked some of her remaining guitars at home with an amp borrowed from her boyfriend. Writing without her bandmates had its own challenges. "Being really isolated, you start to go down certain roads on your own. You think you're getting somewhere, but sometimes they don't get it. That's a really hard bit of feedback. You've spent so much time and energy putting your heart into something and other people are like, 'I don't know...'"

With Stella returning to her native Australia and bassist Jenny Lee Lindberg going home to Utah, the band attempted to work across three time zones. "It was really hard to finish the album in such a disjointed way," Theresa says. "Especially the mixing. We tried doing [online] mix sessions. It's just so difficult with everyone at a different time of day through different speakers in a different mood. No aspect of it is a shared experience. It was really hard to come to consensus."

Miraculously, *Radiate Like This* is an outstanding Warpaint album. Despite the drawn out process, Mozgawa and Lindberg's live rhythm tracks from Rancho De La Luna give it an organic vibe. "We had a lot of heart and soul in there just from the recording sessions. Thank god we had that," agrees Theresa.

Having so long to finish the album had advantages too. "It was amazing in a lot of ways because I've never actually been able to sit with our songs for that long since the early days, to really figure out what I wanted to do with them. There's a lot more consideration to the songs because of that extra time."

Warpaint found a solution to their mix problem in Kokal's hometown. "Eventually we found somebody in Portland," Theresa explains. "Emily and I were able to go and do some real hands-on mixing the analogue, old-fashioned way. You make your decisions there and then, and that's it. That was an incredible experience, the antithesis of our modern processes."

Radiate Like This finds Warpaint at their most dreamlike and poppy. There is less of the rocking out or math rock time changes that distinguished their early efforts, but the reflective mood feels appropriate. For her part, Theresa found a new approach to writing guitar parts. "I was actually messing around a lot with as clean a tone as possible, just seeing what it was like to have a really naked sound. Is that a sign of maturity or something? More and more I just want songs and parts to stand on their own as they are, and inherently have strength in them. I'll add effects after as it suits, but not using that as the means of writing the parts.

"You have to be a lot more intentional with what you write if you're not being smudged out by a lot of reverb or delays. You need to make sure that you're listening to the other parts. It was really interesting to sit with the songs and meditate on what the other parts are, how to interweave in between those, rather than just smearing over the top of them."

Kokal and Wayman are masters of ambient guitar tones, and Theresa is very forthcoming about how to build those tones without descending into chaos. "You can't just throw every delay and reverb on or it will become really overwhelming. You get a slapback or an almost imperceptible short delay that just makes the tone sound wider. If you put reverb on that, it blends the delay even more so that you don't hear it as an actual repeat. You have to take your time and go more subtle than you think – well maybe not with everything, but if you're tuned in, small moves are actually more impactful."

Having written the parts for *Radiate Like This* with dry tones, Theresa found herself stripping back effects for recording as well. "There's oftentimes a lot of effects on the other aspects and the other layers within our songs, so I was drawn to stripping away any effects and just letting things be clear. I tried all kinds of things. I started to use a phaser and a wah. I was trying to introduce some other sounds and none of them were really sticking because it felt like these songs called for cleaner tones."

As always, Theresa's '64 Fender Mustang was her main guitar, recently joined by its twin sibling: "I have a new '64 – new to me – Mustang exactly like mine. It just has different pickups. A friend of mine who works at [music store] Future Music found it. I walked in one day and he was like, 'I just got off the phone with someone who has a red '64 Mustang. It was their dad's and they just want to get rid of it.' It was so serendipitous that I walked in at that moment. I decided to grab it because I thought maybe my son could use it, and it'd be nice to have a backup of the same guitar. It has a P90 in the neck. It has a really brilliant tone, rings out in a really different way. It feels really good so I was using that some. For the most part I've just been using my setup, which is an AC30 and my Mustang."

Don't get the wrong idea about dry tones, though. *Radiate Like This* is still full of glorious ambient sounds, and Theresa was happy to tell us (roughly!) how she got them. "I'm not the best person for remembering exactly what I did. I just feel my way through. I usually stack a couple delays and reverbs on my Mustang just to make try to give more depth and sustain. I have a Boss DD-6 and an Earthquaker Devices Dispatch Master. The Catalinbread Adineko has some really wicked delays on it and get can get really bizarre too, warbly and interesting. I usually put that into a phaser because it creates a chorus effect. I'll do multiples, like a short one and then a longer delay, and then the Dispatch Master will get it really dreamy and washy if I want it to be. A chorus and a shorter delay always good to mix in there, just to create the illusion of a wider sound on the on the initial hit, and then I have an actual delay."

POP ART
"I love beautiful pop songs that have this perfect simplicity," Theresa says.

The core guitars sound clean and full-bodied, and Theresa explains that an overdrive is essential to achieve this with the Mustang. "I usually like to gain it up just a little bit as well even if it's not super obvious. I like it to feel really hot. If I'm picking softly, the more I gain it up for that richer tone. It fills out the sound, and I need as much of that as possible with the Mustang. If it's not overdriven it will just sound thin and harsh." For this album, gain came from the JHS Sweet Tea overdrive.

With the album complete, Theresa is already thinking about what to create next. "This is exactly what we were trying to achieve. I love beautiful pop songs that have this perfect simplicity. It can be a complex thing to achieve. I'm really itching to get back into live and experimental things.

"*Radiate Like This* is a lot more poppy in a Warpaint way. I love that about it. There's this other aspect to us that is the antithesis of that, that has some weirdness and dissonance and isn't always palatable. I want to explore those aspects of ourselves again."

For Theresa, playing live is where she finds joy. "We played a show last weekend. We got back together after two years and started playing together. That's when I had that feeling it was just amazing to play again. It felt like playing all our old songs for the first time."

"I WAS JUST SEEING WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO HAVE A REALLY NAKED SOUND"

ANGEL VIVALDI

SIGNATURE

ARTIST S

SAVAGE ELEGANCE

PRO-MOD DK24-6 NOVA

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Video Jamie Hunt Photography Jonathan Weiner

THE REINVENTION OF JOHN FRUSCIANTE

IN HIS FIRST ALBUM WITH THE **RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS** IN 16 YEARS, JOHN FRUSCIANTE HAS REDEFINED HOW HE PLAYS THE GUITAR. HIS VISION: TO FIND A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE EXPLOSIVE VIRTUOSITY OF EDDIE VAN HALEN AND THE VISCERAL POWER OF KURT COBAIN. IN A MAJOR NEW INTERVIEW BEGINNING ON PAGE 40, JOHN REVEALS HOW HE FELL IN LOVE WITH ROCK MUSIC AGAIN – AND HOW HE FINDS FRESH INSPIRATION IN EVERYTHING FROM JAZZ TO POST-PUNK.

ALSO IN THIS 23-PAGE SPECIAL: JOHN'S TIPS ON HOW TO BECOME A BETTER, "MORE EXPRESSIVE" GUITARIST; HIS GUIDE TO FOUR MODERN PLAYERS WHO ARE ROCKING HIS WORLD; VIDEO LESSONS FOR THREE FRUSCIANTE RIFFS, INCLUDING NEW BANGER BLACK SUMMER; AND THE TOP 10 FRUSCIANTE -ERA CHILIS SONGS – AS VOTED FOR BY YOU!

Words Michael Astley-Brown **Photos** Jonathan Weiner

"*I THOUGHT*: IF I'M GETTING BACK INTO MAKING ROCK MUSIC, LET'S GO TO THE ROOTS OF IT"

When he left the Red Hot Chili Peppers, **John Frusciante** kept in shape by playing jazz solos and learning prog rock chord progressions. Now, having rejoined the band, he has gone even deeper with a musical and artistic workout – inspired by plugging into electric blues and 50s rock 'n' roll. What's more, he's feeling great about the old gang being back together. "It is," he says, "a magic feeling!"

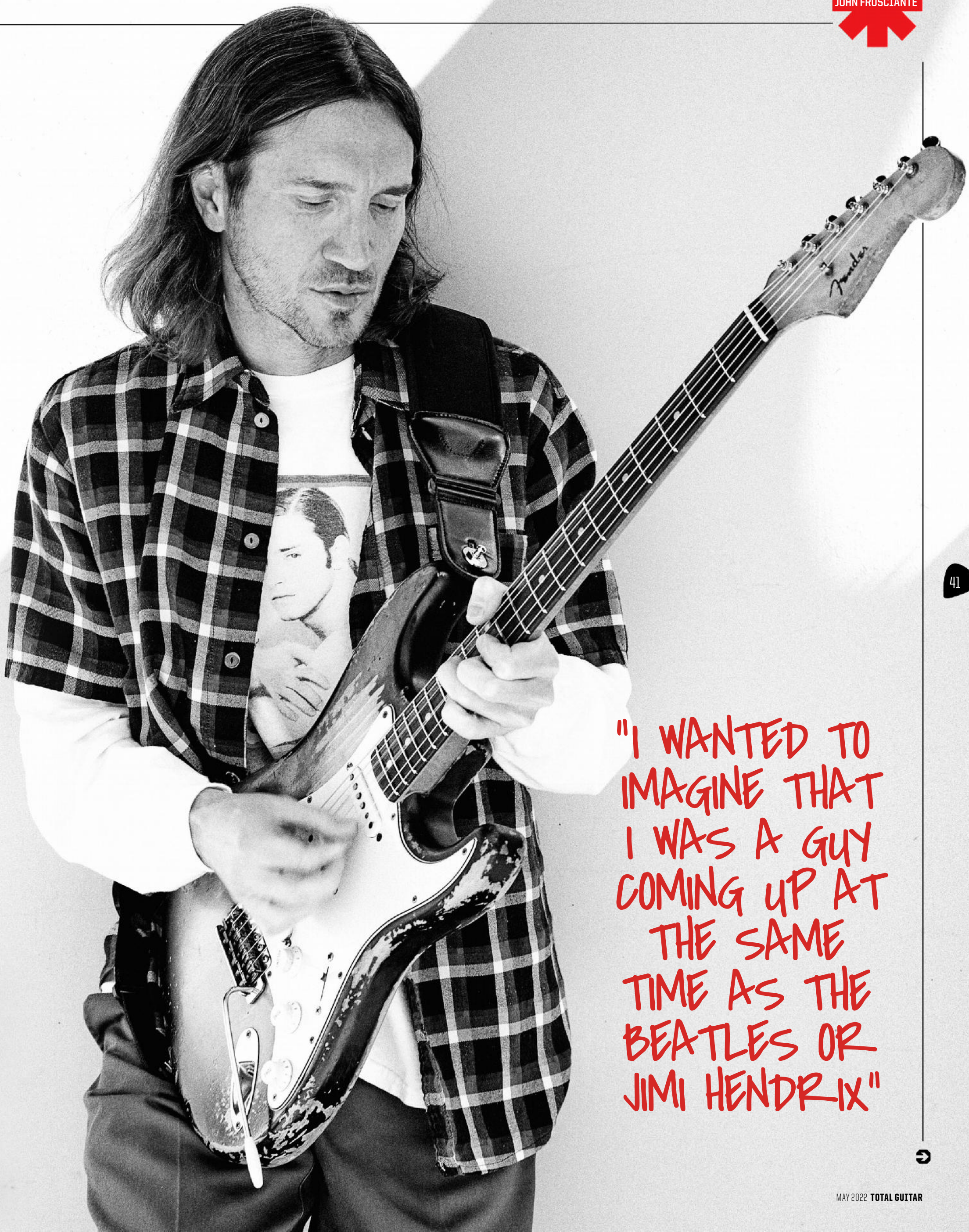
In the end, it was a simple reason that led John Frusciante to return to the Red Hot Chili Peppers. "I really wanted that challenge of trying to work in a democratic band," he says, "with people that I respect and people that I have a chemistry with. I felt that to move forward as a soul and as a human being, I had to accept that challenge. I felt that it would be good for me to try to work harmoniously with them, and not have my ego be the thing that was driving me forward, but to have love and respect for them. That was the thing: to try to be a part of a whole."

Frusciante is talking to ***Total Guitar*** from his home in Los Angeles, the city where the Red Hot Chili Peppers formed back in 1983. With his long hair unkempt under a wooly hat, his face unshaven, wearing black-rimmed glasses and his lean frame clad in a loose fitting yellow t-shirt, the guitarist looks pretty much the same as he did 16 years ago, when the double album *Stadium Arcadium* gave the band its first ever US number one. But it was in the wake of that album's success that John quit the band – the second time he had done so, having previously bailed in 1992, both exits prompted by his discomfort with the pressures of fame.

Following his departure in 2009, the Chili Peppers went on to release two albums with another accomplished guitarist, Josh Klinghoffer. Frusciante, meanwhile, pursued his love of electronic music and modular synths, in an effort to make music that stood apart from the band with which he made his name, and with entirely personal – and non-commercial – aspirations.

So it came as a surprise when the Chili Peppers issued a social media communique in late 2019 announcing Frusciante's return, and with it, the potential for a new album – their first with John in the fold since *Stadium Arcadium*. The fruits of their labour, *Unlimited Love*, finds the band reunited with super-producer Rick Rubin, showcasing 17 tracks that run the gamut of their collective influences, from breezy funk to progressive rock and hardcore punk. In short, the chemistry between John, bassist Flea, drummer Chad Smith and frontman Anthony Kiedis has resurfaced intact, a musical formulation unimpacted by the decade-plus break and even a global pandemic.

Naturally, there's a lot to talk about, and John is certainly in the mood to talk – so much so



"I WANTED TO IMAGINE THAT I WAS A GUY COMING UP AT THE SAME TIME AS THE BEATLES OR JIMI HENDRIX"

that his conversation with TG extends beyond its allotted 45 minutes to more than two hours. He loves to discuss the subjects closest to his heart – the art of making music, the gear he uses, the sense of anticipation ahead of the band's return to the live stage. He is also candid about his reasons for leaving the band over a decade ago, and what ultimately brought him back to his musical brothers.

"I've done a lot of reflection on the causes of my quitting the band the last time that I don't think I had the mental space to be aware of at the time," he says. "It was like, 'I just really don't want to do all this living in this world of fame and publicity; I just want to concentrate on making electronic music and making music just to make music, and not to make people happy, not to be successful.' And that was just what I needed at the time.

"But I looked back and realised that with some of the personal stresses between me and other members of the band, I saw my own part of it more than I think I saw it back in 2009. And while I think no one person is at fault in a situation where somebody quits a band, I'd grown enough as a person to see my side in it, as opposed to just playing the victim."

A NEW BEGINNING

It's hard to overstate the impact that John Frusciante has had on generations of guitarists. With his sparse, feel-driven lines on the Chili Peppers' 1991 breakthrough *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, he introduced 90s players to a wiry, exhilarating blend of funk and post-punk. And in his second phase with the band, a run of three expansive, diverse, multi-million selling albums – *Californication*, *By The Way* and *Stadium Arcadium* – kept adventurous textures and guitar solos at the forefront of mainstream rock, at a time when pop-punk and nu-metal ruled the airwaves.

For this third phase, the reunited band took their tentative first steps in the rehearsal room. Rather than begin writing straight off the bat, they played material from the earliest Chili Peppers albums – released when John was a fan rather than a member of the band – in a bid to reconnect with the roots of the group. Meanwhile, band members suggested covers of classic tracks – *Some Other Guy* by Richie Barrett, *Trash* by the New York Dolls, Johnny 'Guitar' Watson's *Hot Little Mama* and the Kinks' *Waterloo Sunset* all received a workout – which injected fresh energy into rehearsals.

FREE SPIRIT
"I developed a real fan relationship with different forms of rock music, without it having anything to do with my identity," John says.

"I didn't want to feel any pressure about writing stuff, because that would have been overwhelming," John recalls. "So for a month or two, we were just playing songs by other people, and playing really early Chili Peppers stuff. We just had a lot of fun. And luckily that spirit of fun ended up staying with us throughout the whole writing process, even after those songs had been phased out and replaced by going there every day being excited about the new stuff we were bringing in, or the jams that we were turning into songs."

And boy, did they have a lot of songs. By the time the band hit Rubin's Shangri-La studio in 2021, they had 45 tracks ready to go, with a further three written during the sessions. All were ultimately recorded, leaving more than enough material for a follow-up record. "I definitely feel like we saved some of the best stuff for the potential next album," John teases. But, he adds, he never had the intention to write quite so many songs.

"You know, I was ready to stop when we had, like, twenty – I felt like that was good enough," he laughs. "But one thing led to another and somebody or other kept encouraging me to keep bringing in more songs. So, before we knew it, we had way more songs than we'd ever written for a record before."

For his part, John had to readjust his guitar playing to write rock music again. During his electronic music wilderness, any time with a guitar in his lap was more often spent appreciating music than composing it. He learned every solo recorded by jazz great Charlie Christian, and took inspiration from the chord progressions in landmark 70s albums by progressive rock legends Genesis. It helped him reconnect with his love of the instrument.

"I developed a real fan relationship with the different forms of rock music, without it having anything to do with my identity," he explains. "So when I went back to playing in the band, I knew it would affect what I wrote."

Accordingly, the guitarist had a vision for where he wanted to take his compositions, and it harked back to the origins of the genre he was returning to.

As he explains: "I really wanted to focus on where I see the beginning of rock music in history – the rock 'n' roll of the late-50s, and the electric blues that took place throughout the 40s and 50s. I wanted to imagine that I was a guy coming up at the same time as The Beatles or Cream or Jimi Hendrix, to see: 'What would I have done to embellish upon that foundation?' I felt like as long as I'm getting back into making rock music, let's go to the roots of it.

"I'd spent so much time on other records specifically focusing on Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix and Cream. Rather than do that again, I thought, 'Let's focus on Elvis and Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown and Freddie King and Albert King, and Buddy Holly and Gene Vincent and Ricky Nelson – and then, okay, so how would I try to do something beyond this?'"

Those plans would change shape once John began collaborating with the band. To warm up for recording each day, he would play through Jeff Beck's classic albums *Truth*, *Blow By Blow* and *Wired*. But equally, he was re-immersing himself in the textural approach of Siouxsie And The Banshees' John McGeoch, as well as Greg Ginn's abrasive riffs in Black Flag. His approach became an amalgamation of all those

"I LIKE IMPROVISING ON STAGE, MAKING UP NEW SOLOS EVERY NIGHT"

influences, with a smattering of 80s guitar heroes for good measure.

"I really love guitar players like Randy Rhoads and Eddie Van Halen for the way that they could make the instrument explode through hand and whammy bar techniques," he says. "But I also really like the way people like Greg Ginn or Kurt Cobain play without it being so much about technique – although there are all kinds of unconventional techniques in there – but the focus is definitely a more visceral thing. Eventually, by the time we were recording, my concept was to find a bridge between those two conceptions of the instrument: that idea of making it explode with the electricity of the human energy that comes through the strings. And, also, using the full range of the instrument in terms of the types of techniques that, while Eddie Van Halen and Randy Rhoads did a lot to develop them, I see them all as being rooted in what Jeff Beck did on *Blow By Blow* and *Wired*."

STRETCHING OUT

Ultimately, *Unlimited Love* became a distillation of the guitar heroics Frusciante employed on the bombastic *Stadium Arcadium*, sitting alongside the ambient sonics found in the more experimental moments on *By The Way*, all while incorporating a more overt punk influence. His wide-ranging approach spans the anthemic alt-rock of *Black Summer* through to the sultry funk of *Poster Child* and the ferocious hardcore of *These Are The Ways*, which dishes out the album's heaviest riffs – although the track's inception was very different to the rock monster that ended up on the record.

"Before I wrote the music for *These Are The Ways*, I was playing along with Sparks' album *Propaganda*," John recalls. "I was just blown away by how seemingly simple but imaginative their chord progressions are. But once I brought it to the band, we turned it into this heavy-duty thing where the drums go from being like Keith Moon to Black Sabbath to Metallica. The end seems like a speed-metal thing to me. With the power of the band, it definitely turned into something else."

Another stylistic left turn crops up on *White Braids & Pillow Chair*, a mid-tempo chord workout that ends up as a full-blown rockabilly wig-out. It was one of the first songs John brought to the table, and one of his favourites in the way it "mixes up a few things that are important to me", blending a voice-leading progression inspired by Genesis keyboardist Tony Banks with an early-60s surf outro.

John's more textural approach, meanwhile, crops up on slow-burn groovers *Not The One* and *It's Only Natural*, which combine the minimal six-string ethos of 80s goth with techniques inspired by all-time guitar greats. The former draws on Adrian Belew and Eddie Van Halen's mastery

ERUPTION
"I really love guitar players like Randy Rhoads and Eddie Van Halen for the way that they could make the instrument explode through hand and whammy bar techniques."

of the guitar's volume control, teamed with expansive digital delays. The latter features smatterings of backwards delay – an 80s hallmark – on its psychedelic solo, but its deceptively simple verse atmospherics found John once again turning to Jeff Beck for inspiration.

"It sounds like there's an echo on *It's Only Natural*," he says, "but I'm doing that with my hands. That's not an echo. That's me with my right hand just being *loud, loud, loud, softer, softer, softer, softer, softer*. I had actually been doing it a lot because on Jeff Beck's *Blow By Blow* there's a song called *Constipated Duck*, and I think he probably actually has an echo on his guitar, but to play along with it, you have to do that: play *loud, softer, softer, softer, softer*, to sound like you're matching the recording. Flea had come up with the idea of *It's Only Natural* on piano. And then when he switched to bass, I thought that would be cool if I tried to do that kind of thing, like I'm doing on *Constipated Duck*, but make it a part of the song."

OLD FRIENDS

While John sought to explore new ground on *Unlimited Love* with his songwriting and technical philosophy, his gear ethos saw him reunite with the familiar tools he used to carve his name into the hearts of millions of young players.

"The main guitar that I played was my '62 Strat, which is the same guitar that I got when I rejoined the band back in 1998," he says of his go-to, which still features the original hand-wound pickups, but now comes loaded with an ILITCH hum-cancelling system. "Back in '98 I didn't have money for a Strat, but I told them all I had was a Fender Jaguar, and I felt that I should have a Strat for it to sound like the band. Anthony and I went to Guitar Center and he lent me the money to get a Strat, and it was the one that spoke to me off the wall. And ever since then, I've had many other Strats – from that period of time, generally – and that one that happened to be there that day, I've never found one better than that."

Other old favourites also made an appearance: his maple-necked '55 Strat – whose Seymour Duncans were recently replaced with a louder, better-matched set of pickups courtesy of Fender Senior Master Builder Paul Waller – as well as his '61 Fiesta Red Strat and a Jaguar or two. Acoustics – as heard on electro-folk groover

I LIKE DIRT

John presents a guided tour of the key elements on his current rehearsal pedalboard, stacked with pedals that wound up on the new Chili's album *Unlimited Love*.

IBANEZ WH10 AND BOSS CE-1 CHORUS ENSEMBLE

"I used a lot of the same things – the same Ibanez wah-wah pedal, the old one. And the same old Boss chorus pedal, the Chorus Ensemble."

BOSS DS-2 TURBO DISTORTION AND SD-1 SUPER OVERDRIVE

"Normally, I would use the DS-2. But I also used the SD-1 – it's less distorted. It's not a super-extreme kind of distortion, but it can give you a powerful tone."

MXR SUPER BADASS VARIAC FUZZ AND CUSTOM BADASS '78 DISTORTION

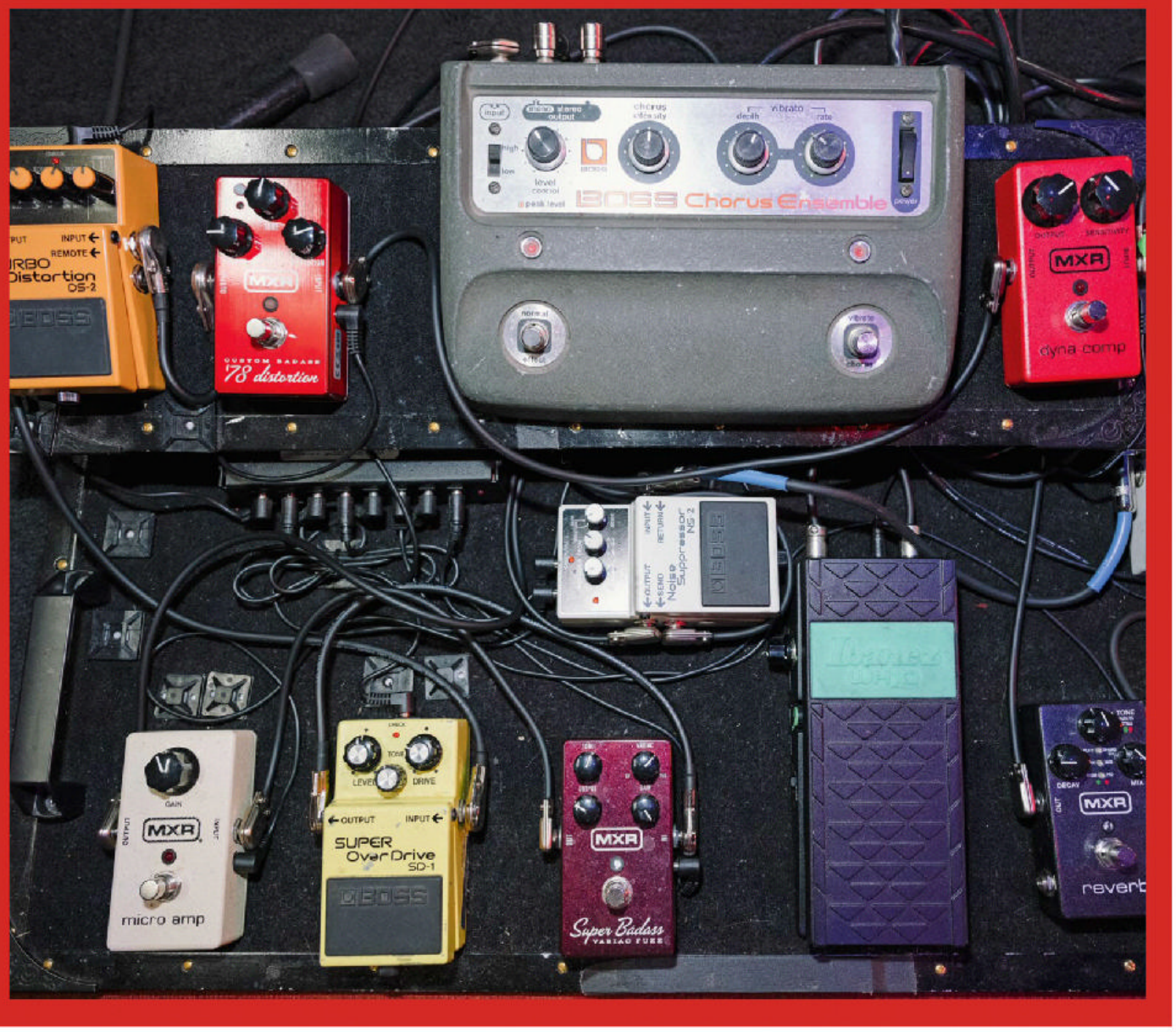
"There was definitely a lot of MXR stuff on the album. They gave me a bunch of pedals early on. I used their fuzz tone quite a bit, not just for solos, but sometimes even for guitar parts for choruses or whatever. And a distortion pedal of theirs, too."

MXR REVERBS

"That was on almost all the time [at rehearsals – the album features real room reverb]. It's one of those things that comes from me being an engineer – I don't think I used to be very conscious of room sounds, but now they're very important to me to give some sort of sense of space to what you're recording. And so it's very subtle. It's a very short room sound, but I just like to hear the guitar that way. The other is set for a more long kind of reverb."

MXR DYNA COMP

"Sometimes the Dyna Comp was just exactly what I needed in terms of getting the right amount of sustain on clean things, and having a more Taffy-like kind of sound. I've loved the Dyna Comp ever since I was a little kid. I was a big fan of Adrian Belew when I was a youngster, and he had one of those on, like, all the time back in those days in the early 80s."



Bastards Of Light and delicate album closer *Tangelo* – were all Martin: two 1940s 0-15 mahogany models, a D-28 Dreadnought and a 12-string. But there were some new-to-the-Chili Peppers additions, too, via a cabal of Yamaha SGs from the late-70s and early-80s. These dual-humbucker heavyweights became John's main squeeze during his time away from the band, but proved to be the perfect guitars for overdubs during the album's heavier moments.

He explains: "When there's a heavy section with distorted powerchords and that kind of thing, a lot of the time the Strat was what I played in the basic track, but [doubled with a] Yamaha SG straight into the Marshall with no distortion pedal or anything, just getting the distortion from the amp. Quite a bit of the time it's the Yamaha on the left, for example, and the Fender Strat through a distortion pedal on the other speaker. And there are even some mellow, soft things where it's the SG."

Amp-wise, the Marshall Silver Jubilee and Major stacks that flanked the guitarist at the Chili Peppers' biggest shows were dusted off and taken out of retirement for the bulk of the tones, while a Roland Jazz Chorus wound up on a few dubs. But John's lockdown reading also inspired him to seek out an old classic – which, as it transpired, had an unexpected connection to the band.

"I also had an Ampeg B-15," he reveals. "I really loved both the guitar playing and the engineering of Greg Sage from the Wipers. He's gotten some of the best guitar tones I think anybody's ever recorded. He mentioned that he thought [the B-15] was the best amplifier ever made. So I bought one of those while we were recording the record to have a small amp to have a difference in tone for certain things. Then when I brought it in, Flea looked at it and he said, 'That's the same amp my stepdad used to have!' His stepdad was a bass player and upright bass player, and that was the amp he would plug his upright bass into. That was a funny coincidence."

But it was the Marshalls that would light the tonal fuse for some of the album's guitar highlights, in particular the visceral, screaming feedback that tears across the solo sections of *The Great Apes* and *The Heavy Wing*.

"Feedback is one of the funnest parts of making music for me," John enthuses. "The approach to the feedback is just volume: having all

four cabinets of two stacks on at once and finding the different places to stand where the really good feedback's gonna happen, and walking around while I'm playing the solos to get different feedback on different notes. And just being extremely loud – like, so loud that if I didn't have my headphones on, I couldn't have stood there. The headphones were the only thing preventing my ears from getting blown out!"

The sheer volume meant that while many of the rhythm tracks were recorded live in the room, John was forced to track most of his solos as overdubs to avoid the amps bleeding too heavily into the drum mics. But those band recordings found the guitarist fine-tuning his core sound, too, making one major adjustment to his Strat and amps compared with previous Chili Peppers outings.

"The bass [neck] pickup is on pretty much everything," he reveals. "For a period of time, like *By The Way* or *Californication*, I was using the bridge pickup quite a bit. So, I noticed that when we were recording this, my treble was up on three on both of the Marshalls – in the old days, my treble was always on zero."

ROAD TRIPPIN'
"I haven't really played in front of an audience in 12 years!"

As a result, the guitarist is still figuring out his pedalboard for the Chili Peppers' upcoming live dates, and contemplating an EQ pedal to even out the treble response on those neck and bridge pickups. Naturally, the studio was ripe for effects experimentation elsewhere, too: modular and rack units received regular use, alongside more conventional pedals.

"I definitely used more delays on this than I had in any time in the past," he says. "Mainly because I was inspired by that 50s stuff – things like Gene Vincent or Elvis, where a lot of the time, there's a slapback delay, not just on the guitar, but on the drums and on the vocal and bass and everything. So, I had a few: I had an MXR analog one, I had a [DeltaLab] Effectron II digital delay. Somebody suggested that I get one of these tape delays that they make now, the Fulltone Tube Tape Echo. That's the last thing you hear on the album at the end of *Tangelo*, when all of a sudden there's a delay that starts and then it builds into a kind of feedback for a second and then it's noise."

One new discovery was the Boss SD-1 Super Overdrive for a chunkier rather than more aggressive tone, as well as the MXR Super Badass Variac Fuzz for hairier solos and meatier overdubs. But it remains to be seen how many of those will make it out onto the road, and whether John's 'board will approach Slane Castle levels of enormity.

"I never used very many!" he laughs at the mention of the cornucopia of stompboxes at his feet during that landmark 2003 show. "A lot of the time, one pedal was just for one particular song, and so I had to have it there just in case we played that song. And it was also because sometimes after being on tour for a long time, I get bored with the same sound from night to night. I like to have pedals that are just there for me to do something weird and different if the mood strikes me."

AROUND THE WORLD

Of course, there will be plenty of opportunity for Frusciante to push his tones and his playing on the Chili Peppers' upcoming world tour. Unsurprisingly, the setlist is likely to be heavily populated by greatest hits from his tenures with the band, as well as plenty of new material – at the time

of TG's interview, the band have been almost exclusively rehearsing all 48 of the songs they wrote for this album and its potential follow-up. So, while the prospect of hearing *Unlimited Love* and even yet-to-be-released material is a tantalising one for fans, John emphasises how much he's enjoying revisiting the old classics and adding some fresh, improvisatory twists.

"It really does feel good to play the old songs again," he says. "There's been a magic feeling for all of us going back to that material. And, you know, I like improvising on stage. So I look forward to the jamming parts of it, and making up new solos every night. [There's] that reciprocal thing that happens with an audience, where their energy and the pressure of playing in front of them and not being able to rewind the tape and go backwards, it brings something out of you as a musician that there's no way to recreate as a guitar player sitting in a studio recording your music by yourself, as I have in the past.

"I look forward to playing under that pressure, and letting go, and letting whatever spirits are with us that night come through me, and trying to match that feeling that gets generated between the band and an audience." He pauses. "You know, I haven't really played in front of an audience in about 12 years. So it's as new to me as writing rock music was when I rejoined."

Yet Frusciante has more than settled into his old role; it's as if he never left. And while he's brought some new tricks from an engineering perspective – citing his explorations of backwards delay and reverb and modular guitar treatments as highlights – it's rediscovering that raw musical connection, and the simple joys of playing with like-minded musicians, that's kept things exciting and fresh. All in all, it paints a rosy picture of John's third act with the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

"There's an appreciation of the chemistry that I can't say I really had towards the end of being in the band last time," he admits. "An appreciation of what we're capable of – when you get so used to something, you sometimes tend to take things for granted.

"I'd had lots of time making music where I do whatever I want. And that was great. And I continue to do that. But it seemed like a really good step for me as a human being to try to play in a band again. Most of all, I just have a lot of fun playing with those guys."

"IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER HOW MUCH TECHNIQUE YOU HAVE"

John Frusciante shares his lessons learned over a career of era-defining guitar playing – and reveals his tips on how to become the guitar player you always wanted to be...

Never stop pushing yourself

The first couple of years I was in the Chili Peppers, I wasn't really on the right path. I thought I could be like Flea where, in those days, he used to practise a half-hour a day, or some days not play at all. And every time he picked up his bass, an awesome thing came out of it. And so when I joined the band, I thought, 'I could be like that!' And it turns out, I can't be like that – if I did that, nothing original would come out of me, I wouldn't feel good about what I've done, I wouldn't have fun on stage, I wouldn't be able to write songs and be able to match his level of creativity. For me to be equal to Flea, I have to work twenty times harder: I have to be playing along with other people's music all the time, I have to be writing way more ideas than I actually show to anybody. I have to be striving to understand things that I don't understand, and that I may never understand.

Stay true to who you are

When I was 18 and the early part of being 19, I was trying to be impressive, because I could play fancy things, or because I could be intense. That never left, but I figured out pretty quickly that I couldn't rely on that ability to be intense and I couldn't rely on my technique – music doesn't really mean anything to people unless you're really giving something of yourself in it and putting yourself out there in a vulnerable way. Not trying to show people, 'Hey, watch me, I'm good,' but to give people a piece of your heart. It was a switch that took place right after we got off tour for [1989 album] *Mother's Milk*. I just decided, if I keep going the way that I'm going, I'm never going to be happy with anything that I do, so I have to give up my ideas of what good is and I just have to try to be myself and figure out what that is – and stop trying to be what I think people want me to be, or what I think the Chilis are supposed to be. I have to try to just figure out: 'Who am I?'"

Don't set out to impress

Generally, when I put away all those ideas of trying to be 'good', or trying to impress people, a thing that I can't explain from my soul started to come out of my playing – and people started liking my playing a lot more at that point; I started to mean something to people. It was one of those weird conundrums, because I had given up caring at that point: I figured I'm just gonna be myself, come what may; I'm going to stop trying to be impressive. And that was actually what caused people to start to really be into what I was doing.

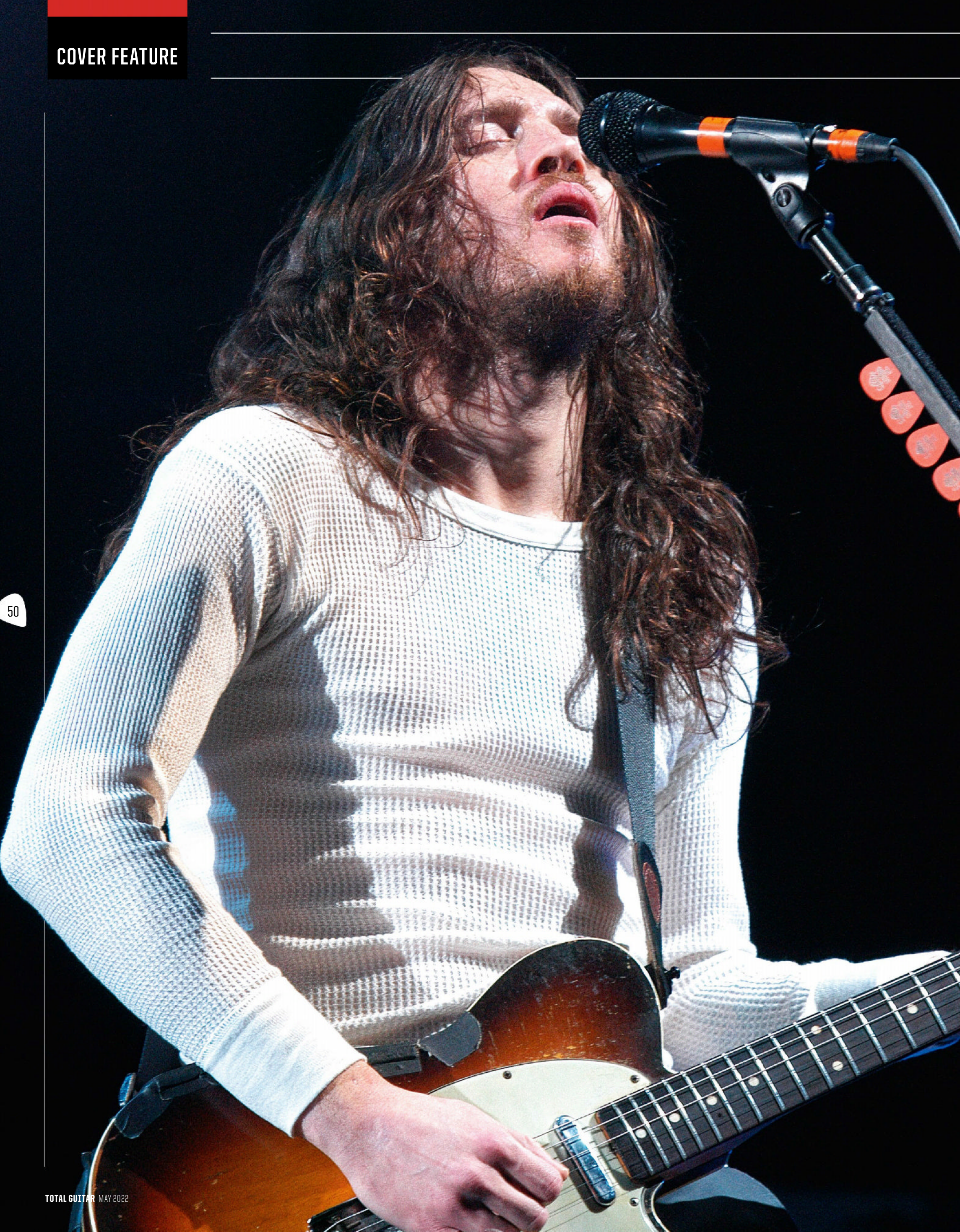
Keep it simple and your bandmates will shine

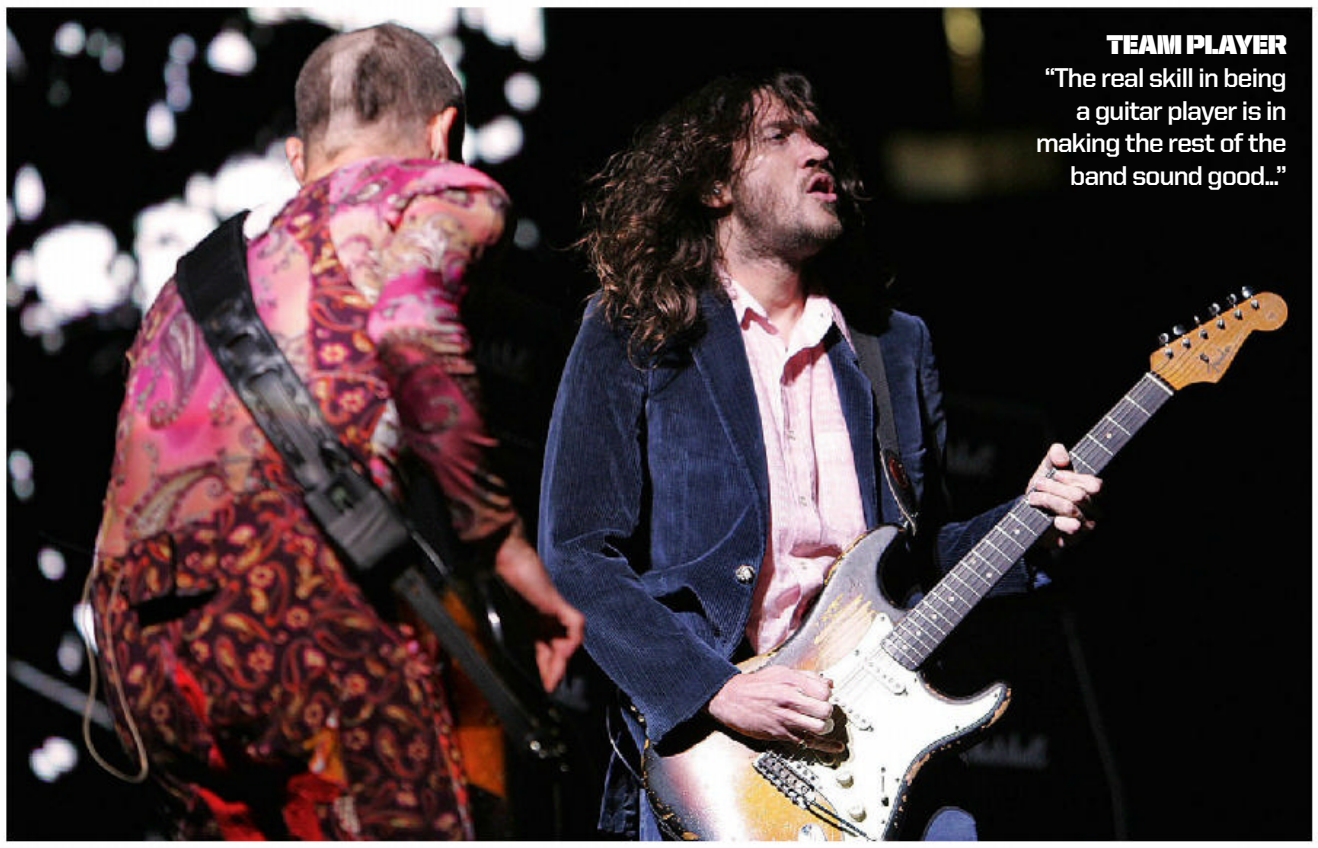
When I started to put all those teenage ideas out of my head, and I started really simplifying and trying to play more from my heart rather than trying to dazzle people with my fingers, Flea started sounding a lot better. I realised that by going into rehearsal, and instead of playing, just do feedback, or hold one note for a long time. I noticed that this made Flea sound awesome! I saw how it affected the chemistry in the band, as well; it made everybody else sound better,

FLEA IN YOUR EAR
"For me to be equal to Flea, I have to work twenty times harder..."

Photography Getty

Words Michael Astley-Brown





TEAM PLAYER
"The real skill in being a guitar player is in making the rest of the band sound good..."

because I was giving them this canvas that they could paint on, as opposed to trying to step in front of other people to do my painting. I was like, 'I'm gonna let them do the painting and I'm just gonna give them an atmosphere to do that in,' and I saw that it had a really good effect on everybody.

A guitar player's true ability lies in how they interact with the band

Too often people assume that a guitar player's worth comes from their ability to draw attention to themselves. And there are a lot of great guitar players who are great at drawing attention to themselves. But to me the essential thing that those people have – that other people who don't draw attention to themselves like Bernard Sumner in Joy Division, or Syd Barrett, or Johnny Thunders or Matthew Ashman from Bow Wow Wow or John McGeoch in Siouxsie And The Banshees – to me, what they have in common with Eddie Van Halen and Randy Rhoads and Jimi Hendrix is that they knew how to be a member of a band and make everybody else sound better. They knew how to be team players.

"Yeah, Eddie Van Halen happened to have a flashy style, but he was a great rhythm guitar player, and he made those drums sound great. He made that bass sound great. He made the singer sound great. To me, it really doesn't matter how much technique you have; the real skill in being a guitar player is in making the rest of the band sound good. And so for some people, it's just who you are as a soul. For some people, that means doing a lot of flashy stuff as well as doing the guitar parts for the song. For some people, that means not soloing at all. For some people, it means doing a very simple kind of soloing.

"I feel like, for me, that's where I measure a guitar player's skill: in how they assist the rest of the band in creating one sound together. A rock band is not four separate people in their own bubble; a rock band is three or four or five people who all create one sound together. And each person's skill can be judged by what that sound is – not by what they're doing individually or what it looks like, or whether or not it's physically hard to do for up-and-coming musicians. I realised that when I was about nineteen, twenty, and I've always felt that way.

Master your dynamics

Accents and non-accents are, I think, the most important thing in terms of sounding expressive as a guitar player. That's the thing you have no control of when you start playing, and you wonder, 'What is it that makes these people on these records sound so much better than me, and I'm playing the same thing?' It's your accents and your non-accents, and then everything in between. My practice routine has a lot to do with playing scales in different ways that switch between accents and non-accents. I'm always extremely conscious of it – I'm really focused on that whole idea of the volume that comes from hitting notes harder and faster, or softer and slower.

"ACCENTS AND NON-ACCENTS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN TERMS OF SOUNDING EXPRESSIVE AS A GUITAR PLAYER"

Switch off your mind and feel the chemistry

When you shut your brain off [while jamming], that's when you notice funny things happening – like, Flea and I will play the same exact riff at the same time without either of us having played it before. It's definitely best to turn your brain off, and just listen and feel whatever feelings everybody else is putting through you. It's definitely important to listen to everybody else, but you should also be having fun listening to what comes out of your instrument. And it's another thing I like about feedback: that you don't know what's gonna happen next. So, you listen to what's coming out of the speaker, and then you play to that.

"Sometimes with guitar players, especially when they're very concerned with whether or not what's going to come out of them is good or not, they tend to place themselves *before* the notes that come out. And I know that's a natural thing to do, the way our minds are locked into the present moment. But if you can let go and listen to what's happened as it's just happened and respond to that, no matter how much you have to slow yourself down to do that, I feel like that's the more productive angle to listen from, and it's definitely the more fun angle to listen from. Because if you're worried about what's gonna happen before it happens, you might miss the boat altogether, but if you listen to what's just happened, and you pay attention to how that relates to the other things that are happening, it becomes a regenerative process.

"In the same way that feedback is something that, while it's coming through you, it comes back at you, I feel like it can be that way with any kind of playing: play a couple of notes and wait for five seconds before you play any more notes. Listen to the feeling of how that affected the other instruments, and then just play whatever the f*ck comes out of you without thinking about it when the right time comes. That's one of the main ways that my whole mental state switched at that point when I felt like I found my own style: before that, I was stuck in that moment right before you play everything you're gonna play. And after that, I found myself more located in that moment after you've played something.

"THEY JUST MAKE MUSIC THAT'S FUN!"

John Frusciante names the four modern players stoking his creative fire

While John Frusciante mostly listened to electronic music in his time away from the Red Hot Chili Peppers, he began to seek out fresh approaches to guitar-led rock towards the end of the recording sessions for the band's new album *Unlimited Love*. Ultimately, he found himself gravitating towards a style he describes as "modern California psychedelic music".

"They take a certain amount from prog, and they go in such a weird direction in a lot of their work," he says. "It's really refreshing to me to hear people making rock music where they're not just trying to have a hit or trying to do something that they think might be popular.

"They've kind of thrown that idea out the window, and they just want to make music that's fun to make. And I hear that spirit of fun in that music."

With that, John shares his thoughts on four of his favourite contemporary players from the scene, all of whom are taking guitar playing in exciting new directions.

TY SEGALL

"Ty Segall is a great all-around musician. One of my favourite albums by him, *Twins*, is just him playing everything. *Manipulator* is another fave. I love his guitar style because he just goes for it and pours his energy and magnetism through it. He's so good at making the instrument and the amplification respond to his feelings – you never know what it's gonna sound like next. His playing has that deceptive 'careless' quality that can only actually be done by people who are so intense as souls, that when they don't give a f*ck, you hear conviction and sincerity. In his carelessness, what comes across is that he cares deeply."

Photography Getty

JOHN DWYER Osees

"John Dwyer is a great band leader and conceptualist. Each of their albums is so unique – some of my favourites are *Protean Threat*, *Orc*, and *Smote Reverser*. I love the direction he's been taking their music – they keep changing and growing in such unpredictable ways. There is a very serious sense of humour in their music – which is a rare kind of musical emotion – but there's also a very warm comforting coldness to a lot of it. It's beautiful when music unifies contradictions like that.

"His guitar parts are extremely inventive – he uses both vertical and horizontal space in amazing ways, and creates guitar parts that assist in the big picture of what the band as a whole is saying, which often means he's able to say a lot by barely playing at all. It seems he cares mainly for the overall statement being made by the group, rather than standing out or any crap like that. And he's another one of these people whose energy rides like an express train through the instrument."

CORY HANSON Wand

"I'm so glad Cory Hanson exists. What he does is exactly what I want to hear from the instrument. He has a very arty approach which has a ton of heart in it – it's a perfect balance. And he's such a good singer and songwriter. He really puts himself out there emotionally, and goes out on creative limbs in all kinds of directions. My favourite albums of theirs are probably *Perfume*, *Plum* and *Golem*. His soloing is so creative and engaging – he knows how to make the instrument speak, whether his tone is big or small. I love it when music conveys a vulnerability that makes you feel you have a friend. He's one of those people who can be just as powerful making soft acoustic music as making loud electric."

ZACH IRONS Irontom

"Zach Irons is a very creative, unorthodox guitarist. He's always finding new ways to approach it: hand techniques I've never seen and ways of using effects unique to him. He is so deeply rooted in the essence of rock guitar playing that he's finding ways of retaining that feeling while completely changing the role of the instrument. Lately, he's been reinventing his whole style, which I only know because he's a good friend of mine – the first time Zach and I played together, he was 17, and it was him and his dad [original RHCP drummer] Jack Irons, Flea, and me. We played the whole of Led Zeppelin's *Presence* album together – it was really fun. Ever since then we've been close. We understand and support each other in a way that is unique to us. He was born on [original RHCP guitarist] Hillel Slovak's birthday, which is a trip."

Words Jenna Scaramanga

SPECIAL SAUCE!

The Red Hot Chili Peppers' 10 greatest songs - as voted by you!

When we asked TG readers to choose their favourite Chilis songs featuring John Frusciante on guitar, thousands of votes flooded in.

Here we present the top 10 – with analysis of what John brought to each track. Some of the band's biggest hits are missing – including *Give It Away*, *The Zephyr Song* and *By The Way*. But in these ten songs, the brilliance of John Frusciante shines bright.

10 CALIFORNICATION

The intro to the title track of the Chili's 1999 masterpiece uses open-position A minor and F major arpeggios with open string notes to add colour. Flea's bass plays the melodic fills Frusciante would normally add himself. The end of the verse builds momentum by changing chords twice as often, through C–G–F–Dm. John plays soft, arpeggiated voicings, so when he starts aggressively strumming Am and Fmaj7, there's a real lift. The solo changes key to F# minor, with a tone more typical of funk rhythm than rock lead. John repeats and develops simple melodic ideas, varying the rhythm or changing the ending, to make a satisfying break without the need for speed.

9 I COULD HAVE LIED

The acoustic part opens, coincidentally, with the same notes as Metallica's *One*: a B5 powerchord at the 2nd fret, alternating the open D string. The mysterious chord ending the first chorus is G6, played as an E-shape barre at the 3rd fret with the B and E strings left open. The acoustic was a Martin D-28, reportedly with the G string missing entirely, and the solo is distinctively John's '59 Strat. Frusciante recorded much of *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* plugged straight into the desk even for solos, distorted by overloading the input, but this sounds more like an amp, possibly the cheap Fender HOT practice amp John unexpectedly loved.

8 DANI CALIFORNIA

Hendrix influences front and centre here. In the verses, John embellishes each chord with a Jimi-style hammer-on and pull-off lick. The outro solo is built around a four-note theme that recalls Hendrix's *Purple Haze* intro, complete with fuzz. Frusciante plays two-bar call-and-response phrases. Each opens with the same four notes (which makes it memorable) and finishes with a unique answering phrase (which keeps it interesting). Next John kicks in his wah and goes for broke with a rapid repeating lick that explodes into tremolo picking and a climactic descending minor pentatonic run.

7 SOUL TO SQUEEZE

This track was left off *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* but recorded at the same time, and you can hear John's ultra-clean tone straight into the desk on the intro lead licks. His Boss CE-1, normally used to split the signal into different amps, creates the swirling intro tone while John riffs around an open A chord with A major pentatonic fills. The slide solo is double tracked with each take panned hard left and right, and experience best enjoyed with headphones. Subtle differences between the takes give it personality, like at 2:38 when the slide rattles the strings of the left guitar.

6 DON'T FORGET ME

Frusciante solos for almost all of this song, one of the 21st century's first guitar hero moments. He gave TG the lowdown on how it was recorded back in 2002: the trebly lead tone comes from his Ibanez WH10 wah, left in a fairly forward position, and an envelope filter. His Line 6 Delay Modeler was in analogue mode, constantly on the verge of self-oscillation, which he controlled with a volume pedal and by adjusting the DL-4's feedback control on the fly. The delay repeats are set to triplets while John picks 16th notes, make the tremolo picking sounds faster than it was.

Photograph Getty

5 CAN'T STOP

There's an art to playing fat single-note funk lines, exemplified on this track, which is to mute every string except the one you're currently playing with your fretting hand. This leaves John free to strum aggressively across all six strings, creating a fat tone and extra excitement from the white noise of the pick on the muted strings. When Anthony Keidis sings the verse, the guitar tone suddenly becomes anaemic. A ton of mid and bass is pulled out to make space for the vocal, but you won't notice unless you listen for it because your brain tells you it's still the same big guitar you just heard in isolation.

When recording *By The Way*, John made use of the core *Blood Sugar Sex Magik amps*, the 200 watt Marshall Major and 100 watt Marshall Super Bass. But rather than run them together as he has for most of his career, he typically used one in combination with another amp, often a blackface Fender Showman with a Marshall cab. John ditched the '58 Strat from the *Californication* sessions for a '62, saying: "That '58 has a bit of a cleaner sound and it always seemed to sound better for what I wanted on Califonication, but for this album, the '62 just sounded right straight away – the sustain's better."

Unusually for Frusciante, this track mainly uses the bridge pickup. According to his tech Dave Lee, the pickups in that guitar came from a modern Fender American Standard Strat. Lee did not tell John that's what they were, but Frusciante chose them after trying various alternatives.

4 SCAR TISSUE

This intro is popular with beginners because you can play it as a straightforward fingerpicking part, but Frusciante uses a pick, muting open strings with his fretting hand as always. The riff is based on playing the root note of each chord followed by the third an octave higher, using mainly F and D minor, with C making a brief appearance in between. Like all Frusciante's rhythm parts, it's deceptively complex, although it's not necessary to copy him verbatim. His relaxed feel on live performances suggests he was somewhat jamming the original, and it needn't be played identically every time.

The clean tones on the *Californication* album came from a Fender Showman amp, and the tone is otherwise extremely dry. You might add some compression to mimic the response of the Fender amp at high volume, but not much else. The slide solo is another lesson in simplicity, a melody played entirely on one string that makes an ideal introduction to learning the technique. That simplicity was vital for John, who commented later that the process of making his first solo album was a journey to "playing with just a minimum amount of notes," which informed his playing when he returned to the Chilis. "It's a perfect place when you get to that point," he said. "That's why I like the *Californication* record, because I feel like it's the result of all that searching. When I hear it, I hear someone trying the best they can at that time, whereas on *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* I was capable of playing much more than I did."

3 WET SAND

On 2002 album *By The Way*, Frusciante began moving away from the single-note funk riffs towards full chord voicings, requiring cleaner tones. "I was playing a lot bigger, denser chords than just your standard triads," he said. "I wanted all those intervals to come through clearly. I'm not really into distortion, except for solos." Four years later, on *Wet Sand* from *Stadium Arcadium*, this transition was completed, with the cleanest tones permitting layers of strumming.

There's a bit of movement courtesy of a real Leslie rotary speaker, and as John said, some guitar tracks were mixed partially out of phase – "to make the guitars seem to project out in front of the speakers." That's not the end of the trickery: a tremolo effect on the verse lead lines makes the picking sound even more frantic.

The outro solo is the antithesis of shred, a passionate pentatonic outburst based on long notes and slow bends. The tone is clearer than the Big Muff Pi fuzz sound he uses on *Strip My Mind*, probably from the Boss DS-2 he also used for the harmonies in the last chorus of *Dani California*.

Arguably the most interesting sound, though, is pushed to the background. Starting at 4:00 and continuing under the outro solo, there's a busy part that sounds similar to a harpsichord. After tracking the original arpeggiated chords, John slowed the tape down to record a harmony part a third higher using his bridge pickup. A pleased Frusciante said at the time "I'm convinced that's what Hendrix did on *Burning Of The Midnight Lamp*."

2 SNOW (HEY OH)

The third single from *Stadium Arcadium* is perhaps the most succinct expression of Frusciante's approach to playing chords.

There's one Hendrix-style flick that is a huge part of Frusciante's style, and for *Snow* he finally built an entire riff around it. To play it, you pick a note and immediately hammer onto and pull off from the note two frets higher. You finish by landing on the next note down the pentatonic scale from where you started. It's also the basis for the verse fills in *Dani California* and *Under The Bridge*. For *Snow*, John plays this fill over every chord in the progression.

Stadium Arcadium saw Frusciante replace the Marshall Super Bass in his recording rig with the Marshall Silver Jubilee 25/50 he has been using live for years, apparently inspired by Slash's use of the same amp.

The massive organ-like tone from 4:16 on the outro is created with an Electro Harmonix POG. Then the huge harmonised, distorted chords from 5:09 were tracked painstakingly, as John explains: "I created an articulated arpeggio using three distorted guitar parts, each playing one note of the arpeggio recorded onto a separate track.

"Normally if you tried to play that sort of line with a distortion pedal, you'd get frequency beating and the notes would be indistinct. But this way each note is clear, while giving the impression of being a single guitar."

It turns out that recording chords one note at a time is not the exclusive preserve of Def Leppard albums after all.

Photograph Getty

1 UNDER THE BRIDGE

Undoubtedly the best Hendrix tribute riff of all time, *Under The Bridge* runs with the chord melody style Jimi showcased on *Little Wing*. Frusciante, though, leans into awkward C shape barres that Hendrix rarely used. *Under The Bridge* is a pleasant introduction to embellishing a chord progression with fingerpicking and melodic fills, if you use a capo on fret 2. For some masochistic reason, Frusciante didn't use a capo, which makes it an absolute bugger to play!

Even the most overused chord progressions sound fresh with a tasteful arrangement and a good song, and there's no better example than *Under The Bridge*, in which the verse largely uses the same I–V–vi–IV chord progression that's been battered to death in more pop songs than any other, sometimes with a I–V–vi–iii–IV variation. Frusciante's great rhythm, and just the right amount of ornamentation, keep the progression sounding as fresh as when it rolled out of Pachelbel's quill in 1680. This is helped by the brooding D to F# major chord sequence of the intro, which was also a favourite of Kurt Cobain's. When the song shifts to E major for the verses, the mood lifts noticeably. Although less discernably funky than the rest of the album, Frusciante throws in some funk signature moves: the D-shape major triad in the chorus with a 16th note rhythm feels like something from a James Brown record, and his occasional scratching on muted strings helps the entire track to groove.

Part of the appeal of *Under The Bridge* is that it defies conventional pop song structure. After the second chorus, the song never returns to any of the earlier sections. The last 90 seconds can be seen as one giant outro. The melody and lyrics nod to what's gone before, but musically it's a different world. The key shifts to A, following an unusual progression from A major to A minor, followed by G6 and Fmaj7, with the high E ringing open to unify the sequence.

Despite this being the most obviously Hendrix-inspired track on *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, Frusciante didn't record the intro on the Strat he used for most of the album, instead choosing the 1966 Jaguar seen in this song's video. Although the tone sounds clean, this style of playing works best with the amp on the edge of breakup. Sparkling clean tones can be too brittle for this approach. Frusciante keeps his Marshalls cooking to avoid that problem, or deliberately overloads the input when recording direct into an analogue desk.

30 years on, *Under The Bridge* remains Frusciante's signature. Flea has admitted that the song lost its spark live when the band performed it with Dave Navarro in the 90s. It needs the chemistry of the line-up that recorded it to work, as anyone who remembers the 1998 version by *All Saints* will attest.

While the Chilis' music has been hugely influential on both mainstream and alternative rock since, *Under The Bridge* remains largely untouched. It's such a spare arrangement, such a distinctive guitar part, and such a vulnerable lyric that it's almost immune to imitation.

Photograph Getty

Josh Fore, Tetrarch

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RED HOT RIFFS

Nail these classic Chilis riffs in true Frusciante style!

There's a strong argument to be made that John Frusciante is the secret spice in the Red Hot Chili Peppers' fiery funk-rock recipe. His second outing with the LA quartet (their fifth album), *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, broke the band into the big time. After the commercial disappointment of 1995's *One Hot Minute* (recorded with Jane's Addiction recruit, Dave Navarro), John's return to the fold in 1998 saw the band on a path to global recognition, with three increasingly successful albums culminating in 2006's *Stadium Arcadium* which topped charts worldwide.

Here we're looking at some of our favourite Frusciante-penned Chili Peppers riffs. *Can't Stop* will test your ability to groove. *Scar Tissue* offers Beatles-y chords with a fiercely tricky string muting technique. And, bringing proceedings right up to date, we're looking at the Hendrix-tinged shapes of 2022's *Black Summer*. Plug in and let's get funky!

1 CAN'T STOP

Appears at: 0:00-0:34
Tempo: 90 bpm
Key/scale: E minor
Main techniques: Fret-hand muting, accenting, 16th-note strumming.

Since it dropped in 2002, *Can't Stop* has become one of the Chili Peppers' biggest tracks, racking up hundreds of millions of streams on every platform and becoming one of their most gigged songs. It kicks off with a repeating motif played at the 5th and 7th frets on the fifth string. Now, remember, this is the easy bit! Just remember to play the line eight times and you're good. The real action begins at 0:21, with a deceptively tricky riff from Frusciante. We say 'deceptive' because the repeating treble notes (on the 7th and 9th frets of the third string) make it sound like it's going to be simple; however, there is another element to master: a moving bassline on the fifth and sixth strings. And while Frusciante's aggressive pick attack and wide strumming motion propel the track with urgency, you're left having to keep five idle strings quiet as you navigate from string to string. Practising slowly at first, and keep in mind that your first finger will be doing most of the string muting.

TG Tip: Try using your thumb to fret the notes on the sixth string. This allows you to play the entire riff without changing hand position.

2 SCAR TISSUE

Appears at: 0:00-0:11
Tempo: 90 bpm
Key/scale: F major
Main techniques: Fret-hand muting, string skipping, sliding, melodic lines over implied chords, pull-offs.

We're looking at another Chilis mega-hit here, specifically the Beatles-y *Blackbird*-esque two-note shapes that open *Scar Tissue*. John uses the root and 3rd intervals of F, C and D minor chords, but, instead of playing pure 3rds, he adds an extra octave in between each pair of notes, covering a wider register to outline the chord progression while still making room for melodic variations. If that sounds like a lot to take on board don't worry! There are only three shapes to learn. The real challenge comes from the rhythm and picking. On the recording John singles out each individual note (downpick the root note; up-pick the high note), but note that in live shows he tends to strum, keeping the fretted notes ringing out over each other with the idle strings dead quiet. It's ninja-level fret-hand muting, and it's well worth practising the song this way to hone your own technique.

TG Tip: Use your second finger to fret the sixth string to allow your first finger to get a better position to mute the idle strings.

3 BLACK SUMMER

Appears at: 0:00-0:09
Tempo: 105 bpm
Key/scale: E minor
Main techniques: Hammer-ons and pull-offs within a barre chord, slides, and regular string changes.

John's 2022 Chili Peppers comeback track, *Black Summer* is drenched with Hendrix-esque decorative runs right from the top – and we're looking at the intro riff here. It's based around a 7th position E minor barre chord with hammer-ons and pull-offs included on the second, third and fourth strings. You'll need a steady barre so that every string in the chord shape continues to ring out as you hammer and pull. Fluff your barre and it'll all sound a bit thin! After the hammer-ons and pull-offs comes a sliding phrase on the second and third strings. You'll be starting at the 8th and 9th frets and sliding up to the 10th and 11th. Just like the barre, this is another case where you need to keep your finger pressure consistent. Get it right and these two-note shapes will sing. Finally, note that John tuned to E♭ standard here, but we've stayed in E to save you having to retune.

TG Tip: Use a chorus pedal with the rate set to pulse at an eighth-note triplet rhythm, and with mix and depth set to medium levels.

Photo: Getty

LESSONS IN FUNK

Flex your funk muscles with this groove masterclass as we examine Chilis-style funk-rock, contemporary neo-soul, jazz-fusion and more...

Guitars and backing Steve Allsworth

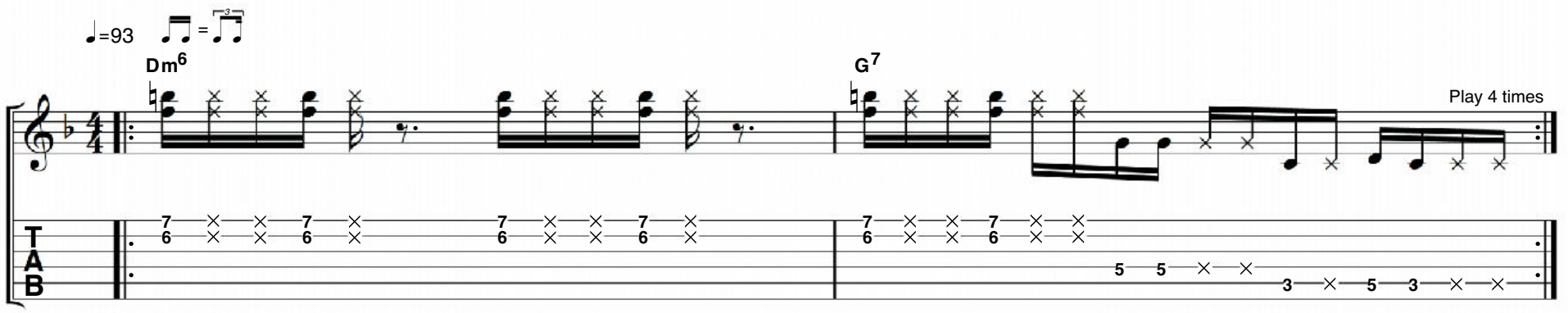
Although funk can be traced back to the early days of James Brown, like all styles, it has evolved a lot over the last 60 years. With an increasing body of great rhythm guitar players on the live circuit as well as well as online, there's never been a greater abundance of talent and innovation, that's constantly pushing stylistic boundaries.

Within this evolution, funk has crossed over into other styles such as RnB, neo-soul, fusion, gospel, and many more guitarists are becoming switched on to the beauty of using a clean sound and really working on rhythm and harmony. At its heart, classic funk is all about syncopation, space and generally static/simple chords. The crossover into neo-soul and gospel largely retains this element of syncopation and rhythm but tends to use more extended and colourful harmony.

You'll also find many of the guitarists featured here frequently use fingerstyle technique to bring in slaps/pops borrowed from classic funk bass technique, together with wider intervals and greater control over chord shapes.

1 JOHN FRUSCIANTE FUNK #1

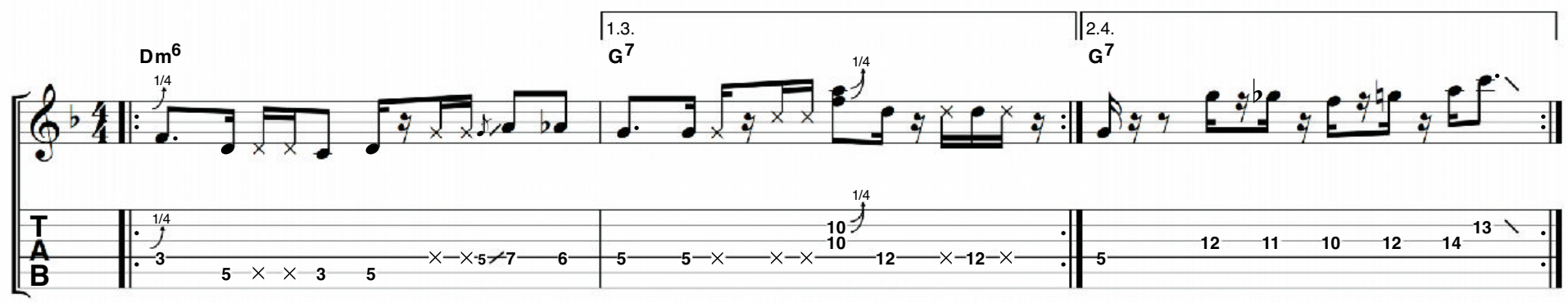
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



When many people think of funk, they often turn to this 90s-inspired Frusciante style rhythm. This small partial chord is inherently funky because of the space, fret-hand mutes and swing feel. It's all about how it interacts with the bassline, so notice how we're not filling the bar with endless fret-hand muting. In this case, less is more.

2 JOHN FRUSCIANTE FUNK #2

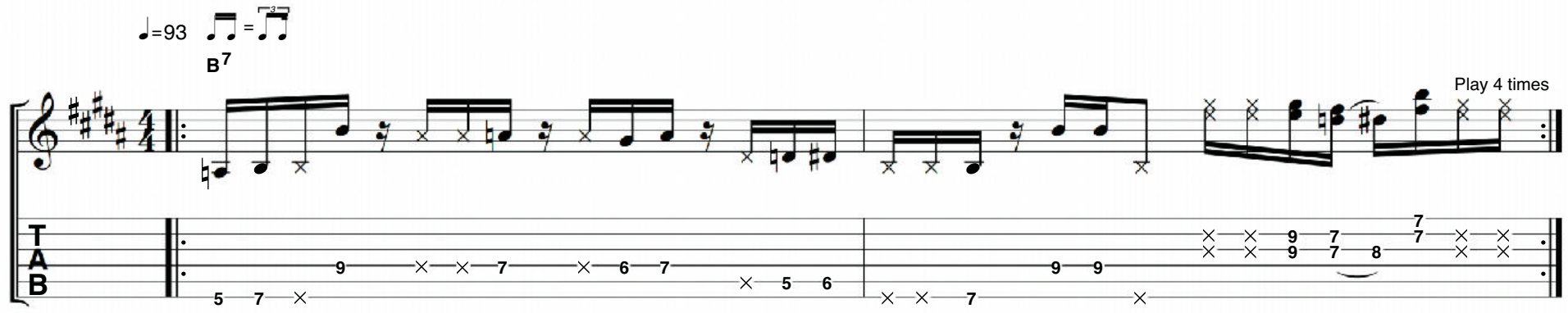
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Just like the classic James Brown blueprint of having two interlocking guitar parts, this D minor pentatonic idea is designed to 'fill in the cracks' of our previous guitar part. John is a master of string muting, especially when fretting single notes while strumming through all the strings. Once you've mastered this technique, you'll have the freedom in the picking hand to improvise any rhythm you like.

3 ERIC KRASNO FUNK

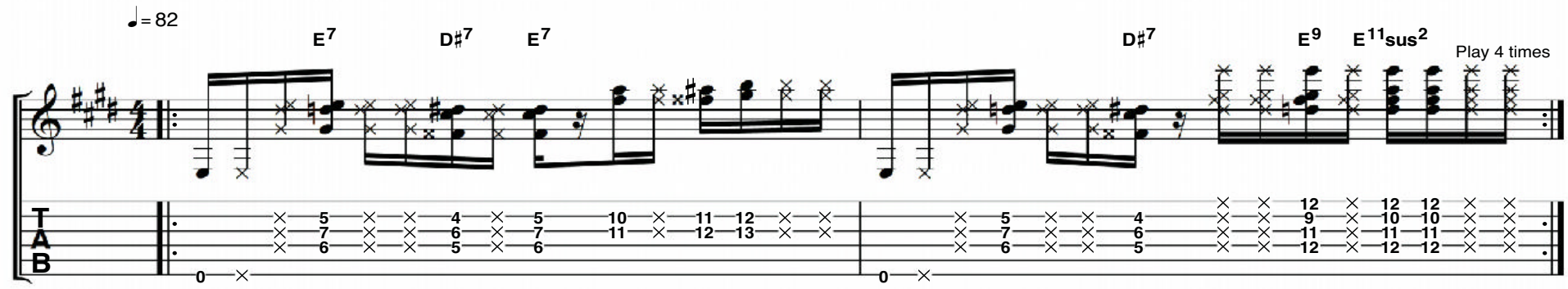
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



As part of jazz-funk outfit Lettuce, Krasno's style often mirrors the sparse single-note lines of James Brown's most famous guitarist Jimmy Nolen. Try to view our example riff through the lens of the B7 chord shape at the 7th fret and you should be able to see the connection between classic blues lines that target pentatonic ideas within the shape. Aim to keep your pick hand moving at all times, but try to avoid constant fret-hand mutes.

4 CORY WONG FUNK

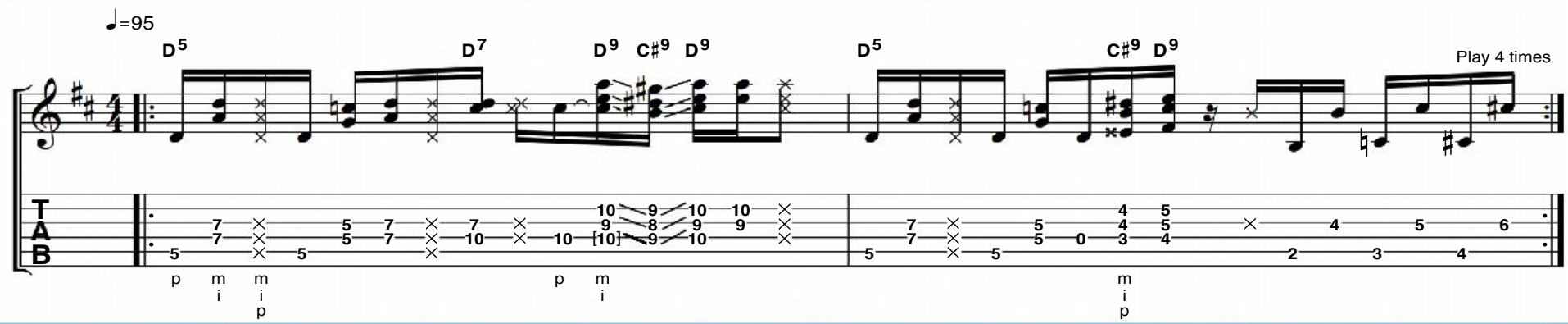
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Cory's signature sound is position 4 on a Strat together with a dash of compression to make those funky lines pop. He has a particularly rubbery pick hand wrist, so the key to this riff is constant pick hand motion coming from the wrist rather than the arm. This riff is also a great lesson in how to get the most from a humble E7 chord, with Cory's trademark melodic variations up and down the neck.

5 SNARKY PUPPY FINGERSTYLE

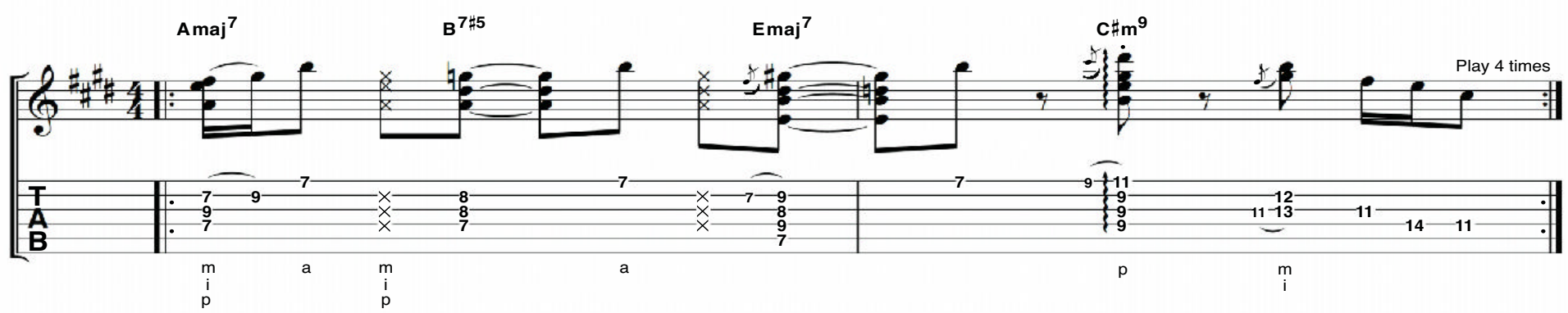
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Snarky Puppy's Mark Lettieri is a great fingerstyle specialist. Here the thumb, index and middle fingers can be used for percussive effects as well as playing chords/notes. Beat 2 is a great example of the 'keeping time' percussive technique. This offbeat 'mini slap' comes from pivoting the pick hand at the wrist, away from the strings and back to rest on the strings.

6 MARK LETTIERI NEO-SOUL

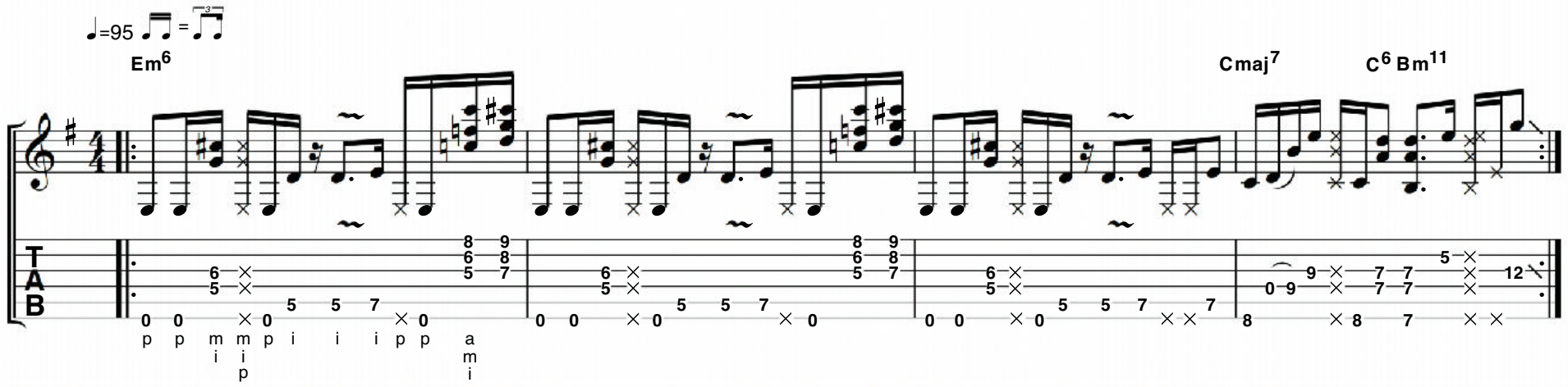
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Here, as we delve into gospel-tinged neo-soul, we start to hear complex chord extensions such as the 9th and ♯5th for added tension. Much of the gospel/neo-soul stylistic vibe of this riff comes from the quick hammer-ons on chords. As with our previous Lettieri-inspired riff, fingers work best, as you can get some great separation between notes in the chords. You can also try raking through chords with the thumb (as with the C♯m9 chord).

7 MATEUS ASATO FUNK

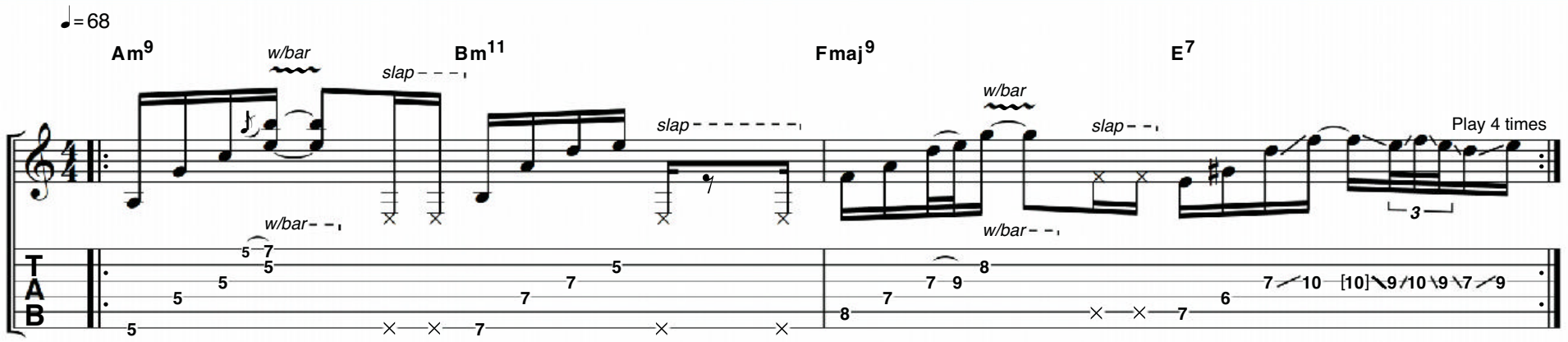
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



This Mateus Asato inspired riff is a natural development of Mark Lettieri's fingerstyle approach, but here we're also incorporating a similar funk chord shape to our Frusciante ideas. Again, the pick hand 'keeps time' by slapping/coming to a rest on the strings on every backbeat (beats 2 and 4). The final bar is a great example of how Mateus uses slick hammer-ons/legato as a rhythmic/percussive device.

8 MELANIE FAYE NEO-SOUL

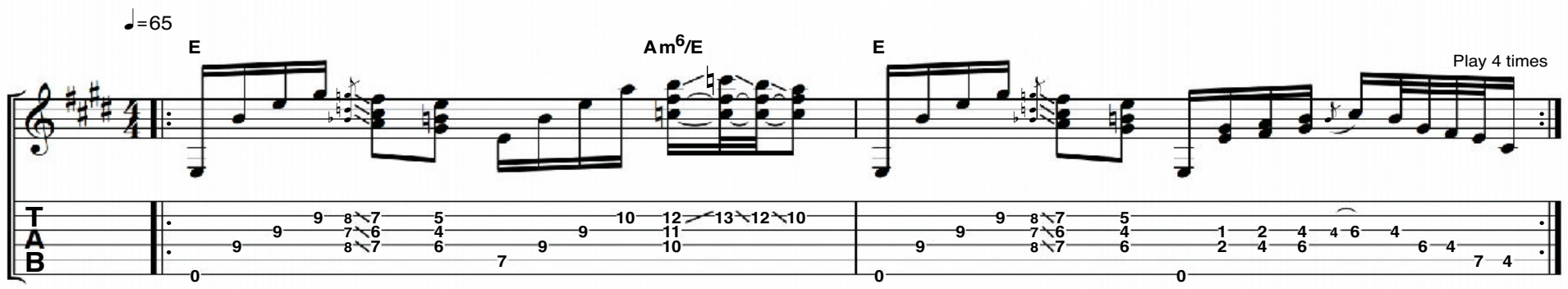
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



The use of the whammy bar is a great way to add a lyrical/vocal-like quality to your extended chords, and this is a feature heard a lot in contemporary neo-soul. Try to be subtle however, so you only need to use the ring and pinky finger to apply a gentle vibrato to the bar. The quick slide/legato manoeuvre that many guitarists all the way from Chris Buck to Melanie Faye love to use is a key idea that can add interest to simple single-note melodies.

9 JUSTUS WEST NEO-SOUL

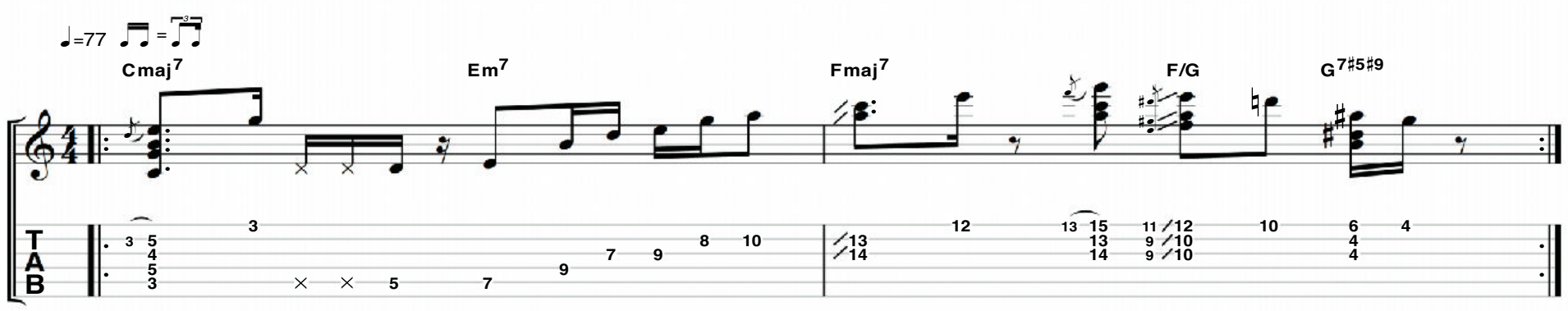
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Taking inspiration from Grammy-winning multi-intrumentalist and producer Justus West, here we have a beautiful Am6/E chord that provides harmonic movement from the E major base. Notice how there's an internal melodic idea throughout that almost feels like a crossover from classic jazz. The downward chord slides can be a little tricky to master at first. Here you need to concentrate on getting equal pressure on all your fingers as you slide, so watch out for any fret buzz or muted notes.

10 ISAIAH SHARKEY SOUL/JAZZ

BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Isaiah tends to play lines on the jazzier side of the street, so alongside classic soul chord ideas and improvised pentatonic lines, you'll also find 'outside' chords such as the G7#5#9. Here, the addition of #5 and #9 intervals provides tension before you move back to the home chord of Cmaj7.

"Guess who just got back today?

Them wild-eyed boys that'd been away
Haven't changed, had much to say
But man, I still think them cats are crazy

- Sir Phil Lynott

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JOHN MAYER
GRAVITY

Learn every note of this Mayer classic, from the subtle rhythm work to those beautiful melodic lead lines

John Mayer spent his formative years absorbing the work of the great American blues players, including 'The Three Kings' (Freddie, Albert and BB), Buddy Guy and Stevie Ray Vaughan. No wonder then that his playing is infused with such expression and soul. This historical awareness of his instrument helped the young John Mayer to develop a mature, individual style early in his career. *Gravity* was a single taken from his multi-platinum selling breakthrough third album *Continuum* (2006), a heartfelt ballad that sounds as good today as when it was first released.

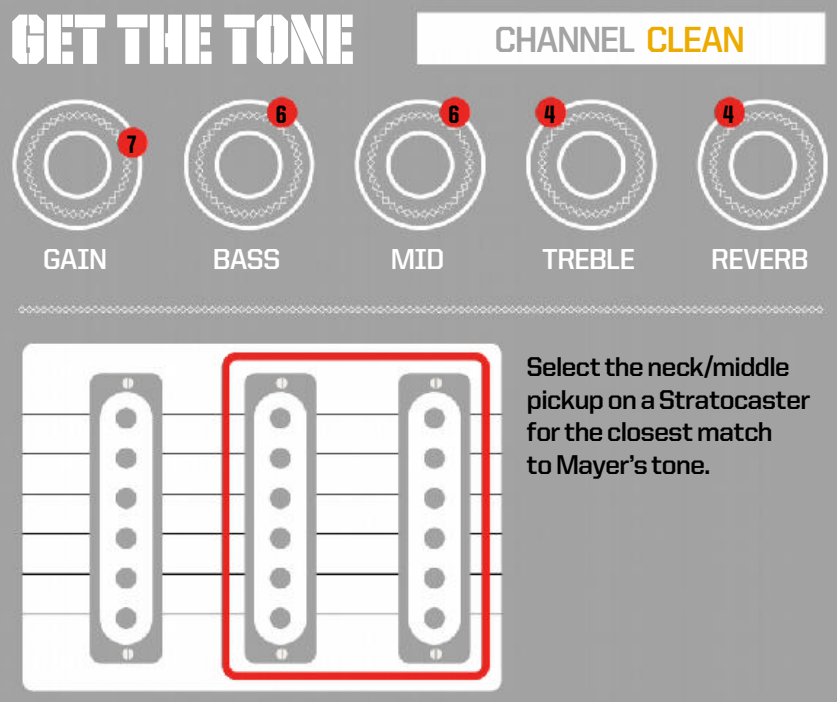
There are two short solo sections in the song, both played over G and C chords (a I–IV progression in the key of G major). The major pentatonic scale (occasionally supplemented with a 4th (C) from the major scale) is Mayer's scale of choice, first applied as a 'box shape' in the intro, then later using a linear approach along the length of the strings. Read on and check out all the chord shapes and our transcription where we've tabbed the lot.

GET THE SOUND

Everything you need to know before playing 'Gravity'

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL CLEAN

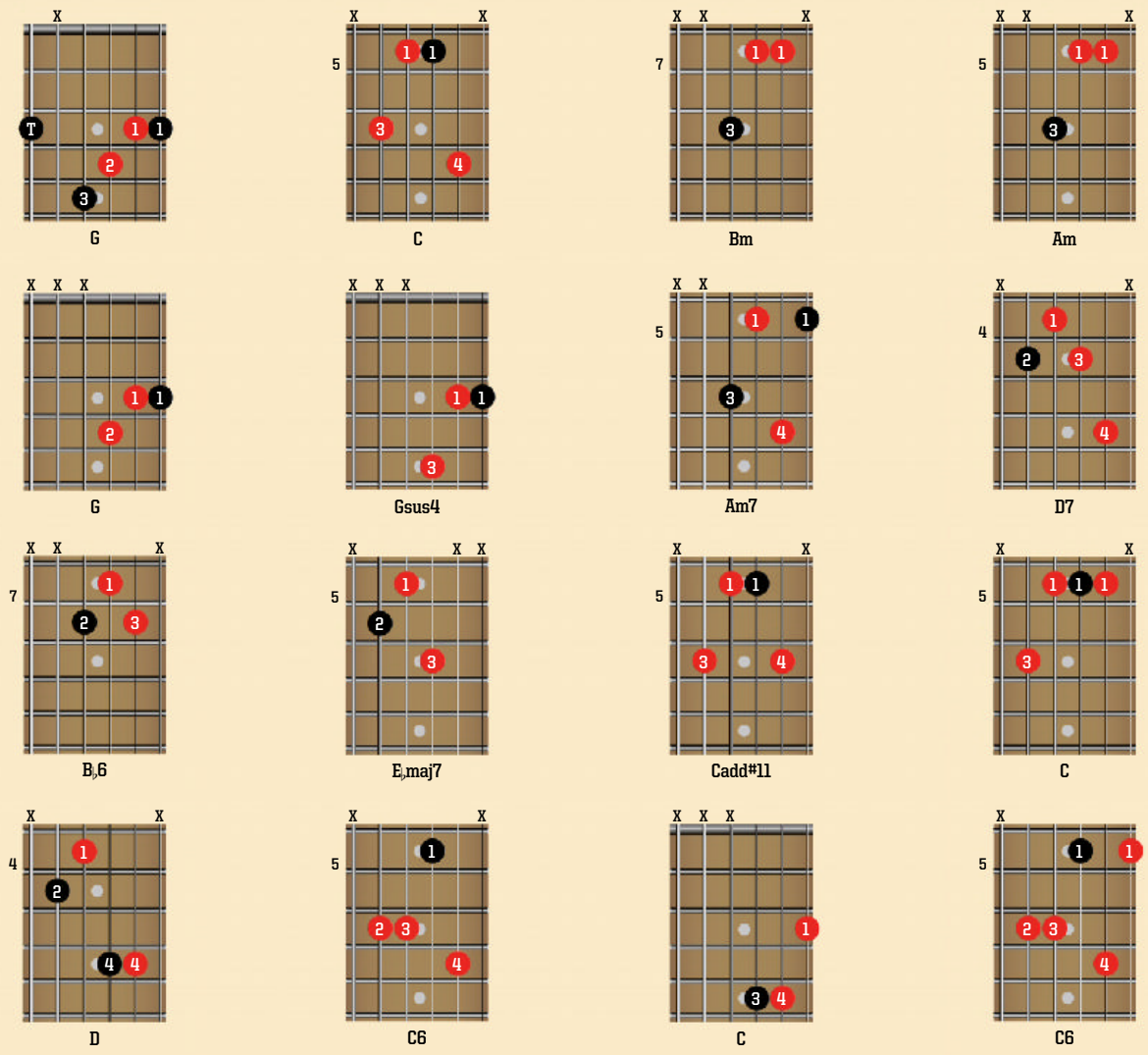


Select the neck/middle pickup on a Stratocaster for the closest match to Mayer's tone.

Neither overdriven nor completely clean, but with just enough gain to provide that wonderful singing sustain, this is a trademark tone to covet. During early live shows John played the track on various Fender Stratocasters, these days opting for his signature PRS Silver Sky. Amp-wise, he was using various Fender, Two Rock and Dumble amps. Select a clean channel on your amp, pushing the input gain for sustain and compression on the solos, backing off your guitars' volume for the rhythm parts. Alternatively, experiment with a clean boost or transparent drive pedal to push the front end of your amplifier slightly.

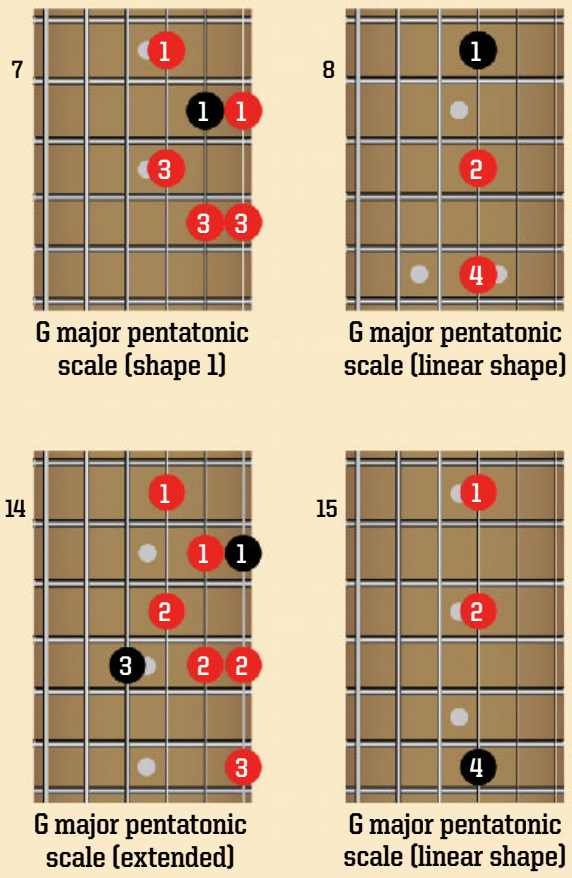
CHORDS

This may seem like a lot of chords, but it's because Mayer uses different inversions and embellishments to bring his rhythm work to life. At its core though, *Gravity* follows just six chords: G, C, Am7, D, B♭6 and E♭maj7. Familiarise yourself with these as they appear most often. The other shapes are occasional variations, often involving simply adding or omitting a note to the basic shape.



SCALES

For the intro solo, Mayer uses shape one of the major pentatonic scale. You'll only need the four lowest notes, bending the high 10th-fret A up a tone to play the B note. The solo starts with fluid finger slides, played in a linear way along the second string. In the second half of the solo the highest notes are achieved with an extended version of G major pentatonic up in 14th position.



G major pentatonic scale (shape 1)

G major pentatonic scale (linear shape)

G major pentatonic scale (extended)

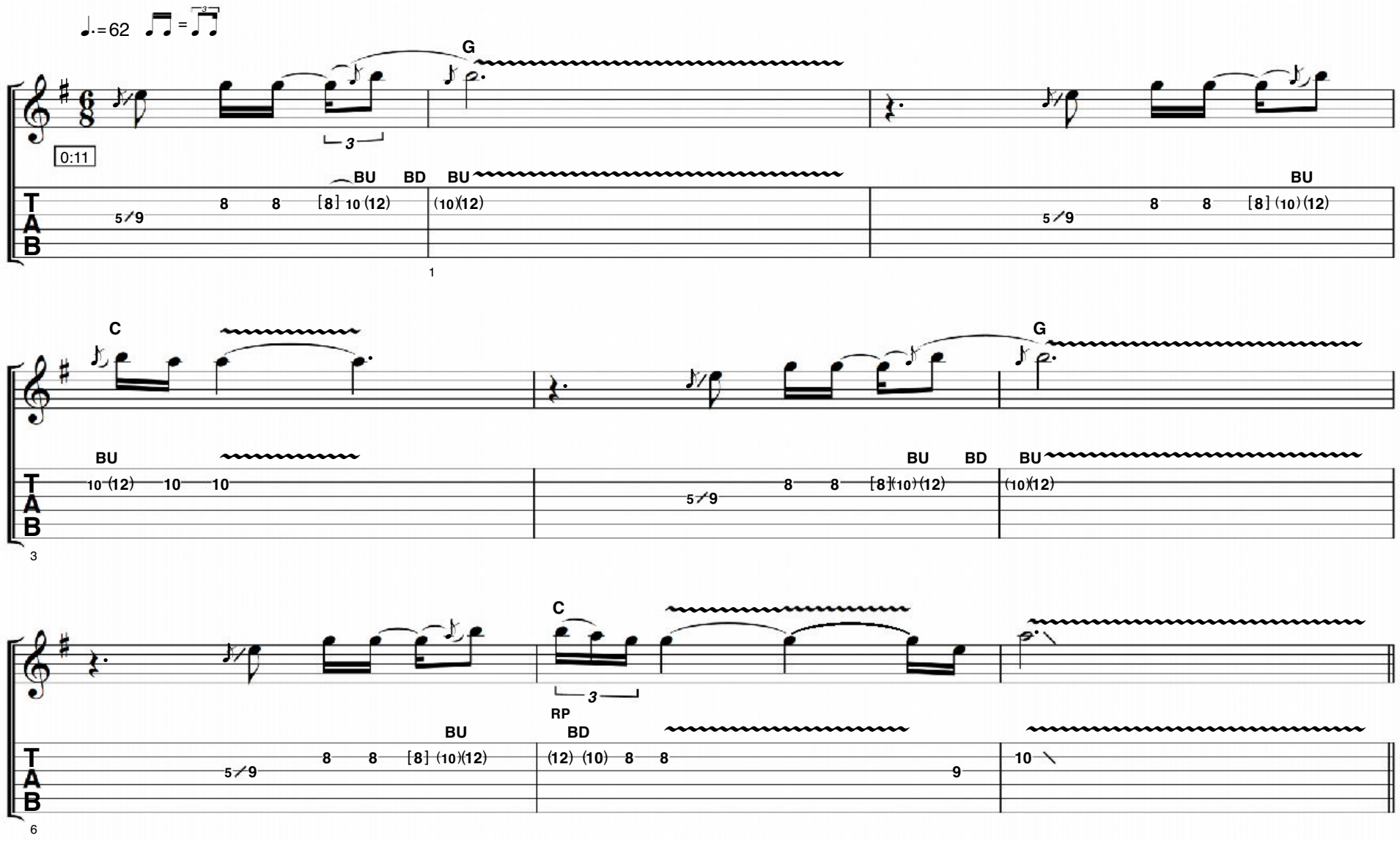
G major pentatonic scale (linear shape)

Guitars and backing Phil Capone Photo Getty

JOHN MAYER
GRAVITY

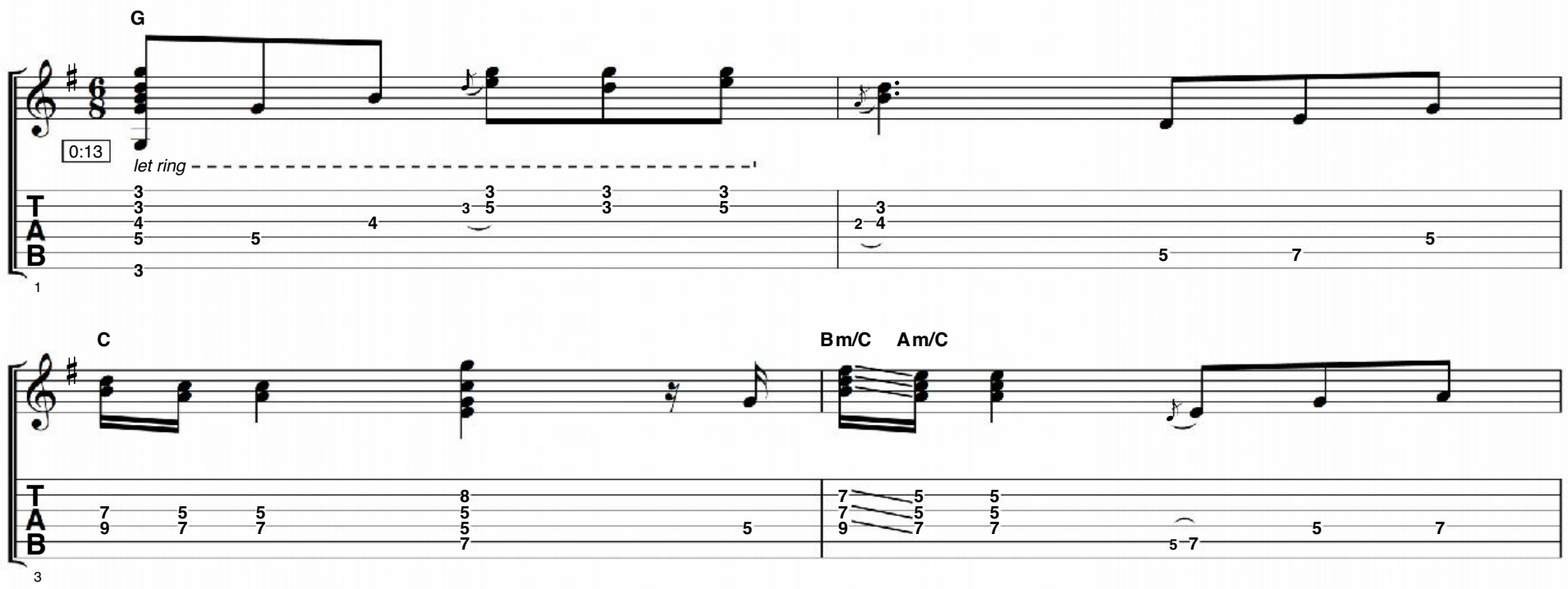
GRAVITY
Words and Music by John Mayer
© Milky Boy Music (GMR)

JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Intro (lead) **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**

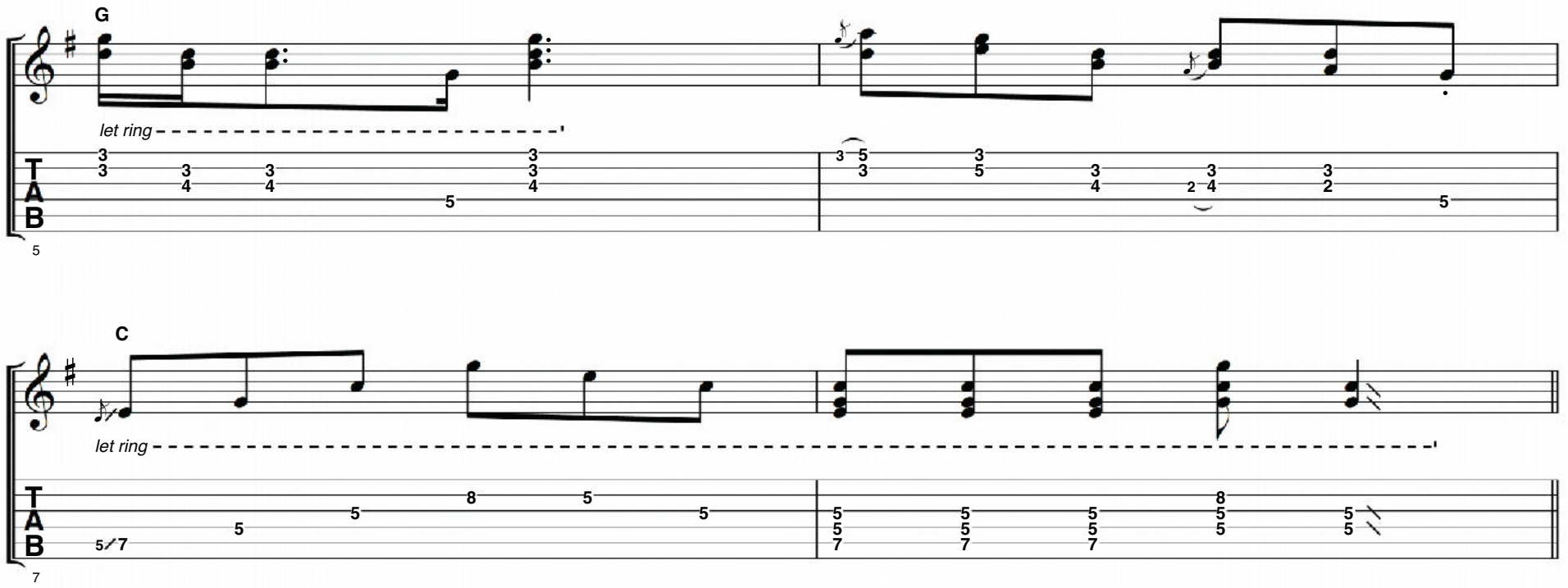


The intro solo uses notes from a small section of the G major pentatonic scale, so look back to the scale shapes on p67 for all the info. John's string bends are fluid and sweet. Just look out for instances where you need to hold and re-pick a bend, and for similar phrases which are not re-picked.

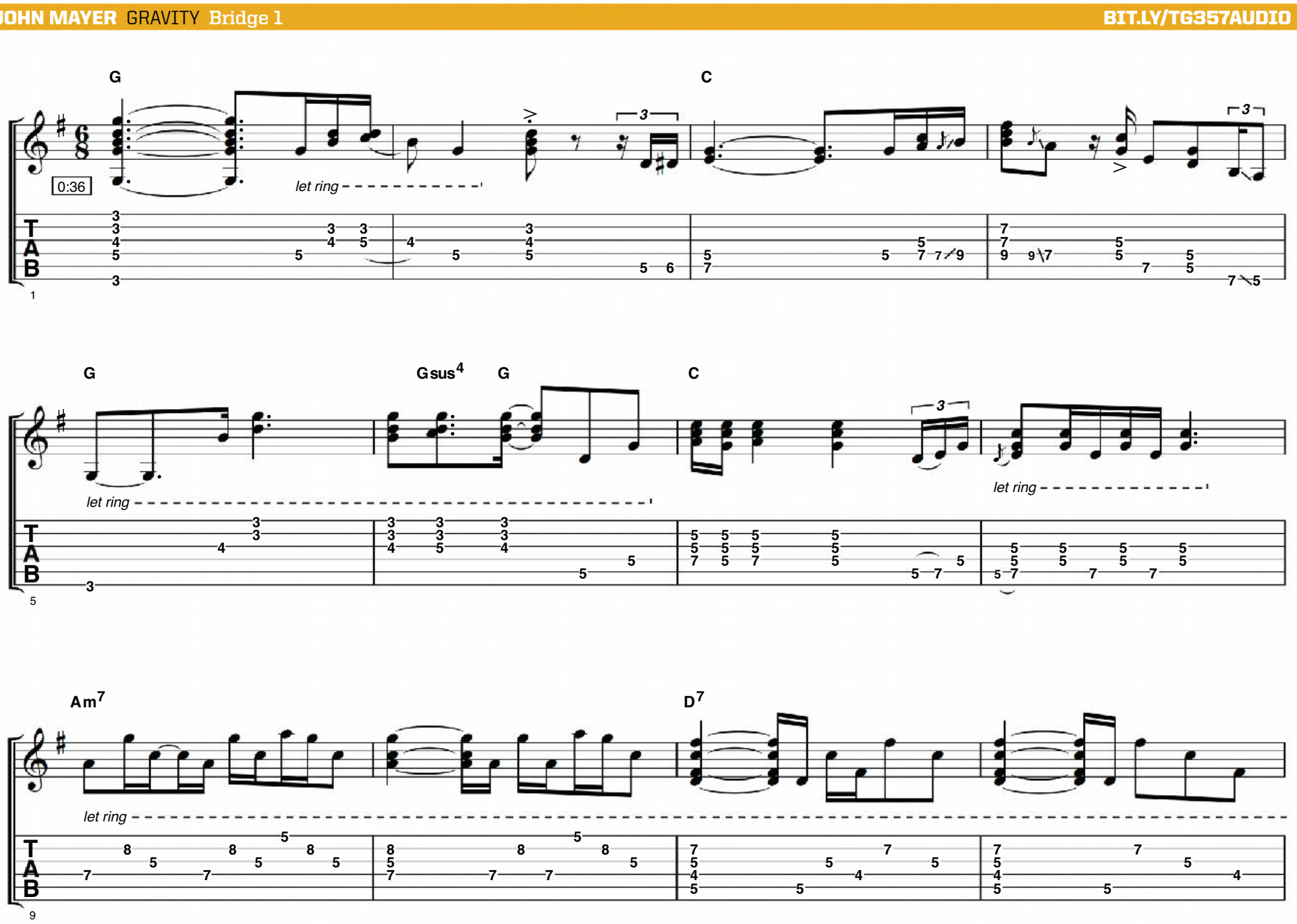
JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Intro (rhythm) **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**

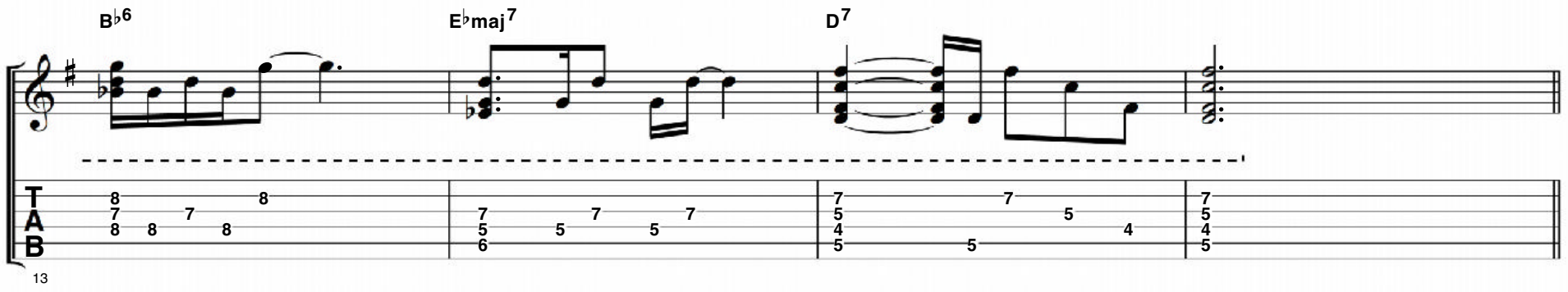


JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Intro (rhythm, cont'd) **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**

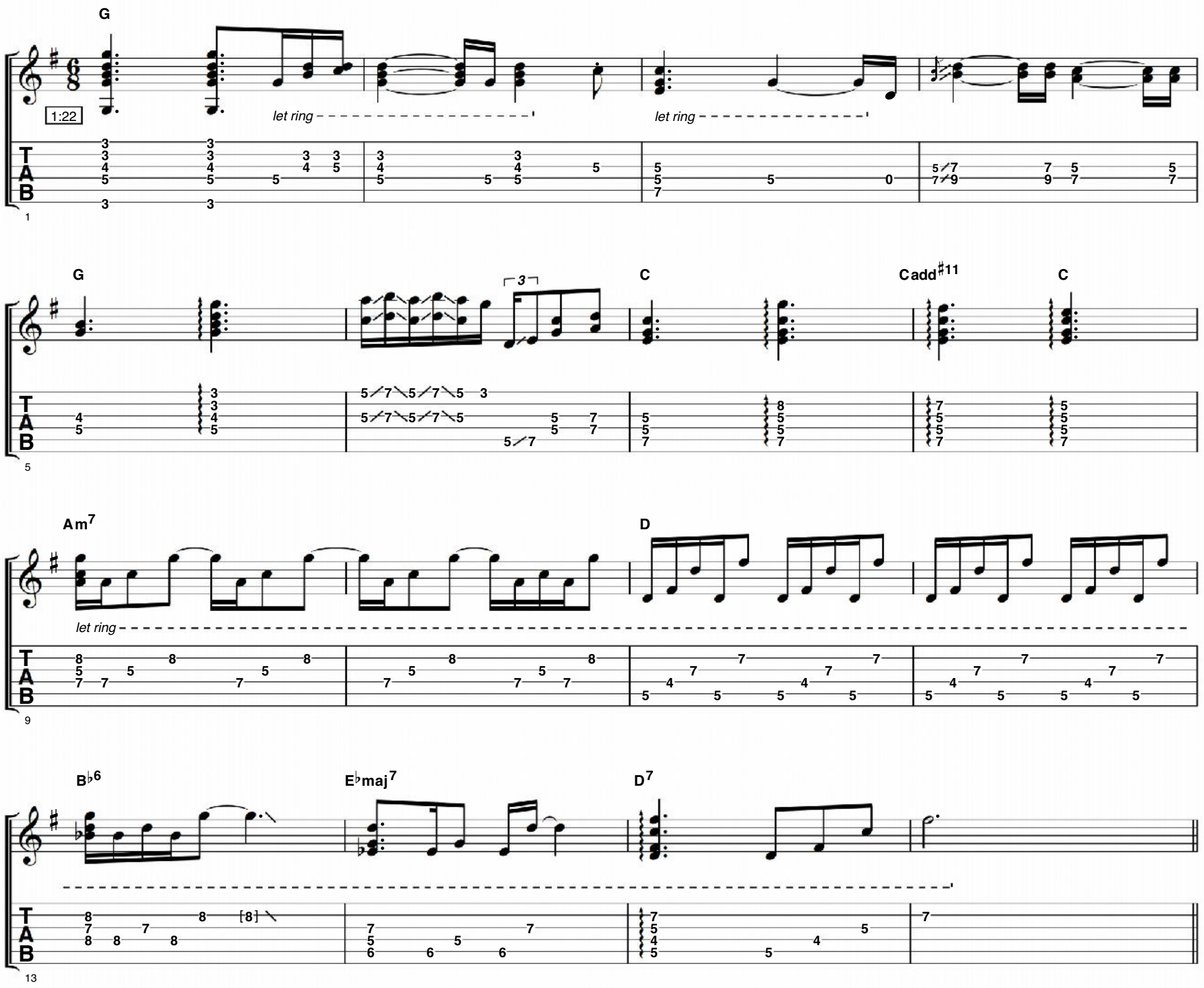


The opening G chord is played Hendrix-style with your thumb on the sixth string. If you find this awkward, simply omit the note and play the four-note shape instead. It's important to hold down the chords for their full duration, as indicated by the 'let ring' instruction, while picking out the notes as indicated in the tab.

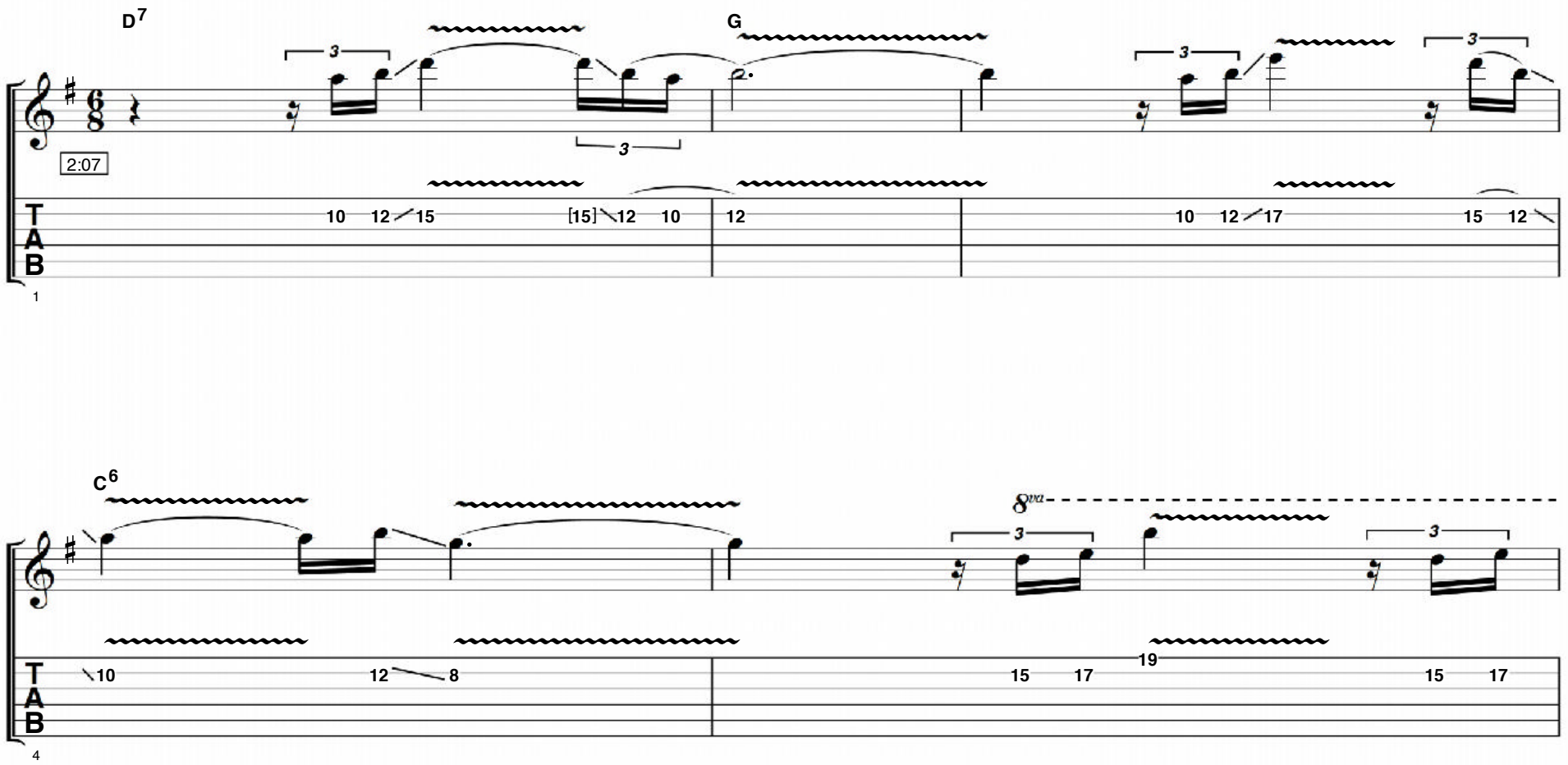
JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Bridge 1 **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**

JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Bridge 1 (cont'd) **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**



In bar 9, the Am7 chord should be arpeggiated (i.e., played one note at a time) picking the notes as indicated in the tab. Make sure you fret and hold down the full shape from the first beat of the bar. This is equally important for the D7, B♭6 and E♭maj7 chords that follow.

JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Bridge 2 **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**

Look out for the sliding 6th intervals in bar 6, these should be fretted with your second finger on the lower note and your third finger on the first string. This facilitates a smooth shift from the previous G chord, as you'll be keeping your second finger on the same string.

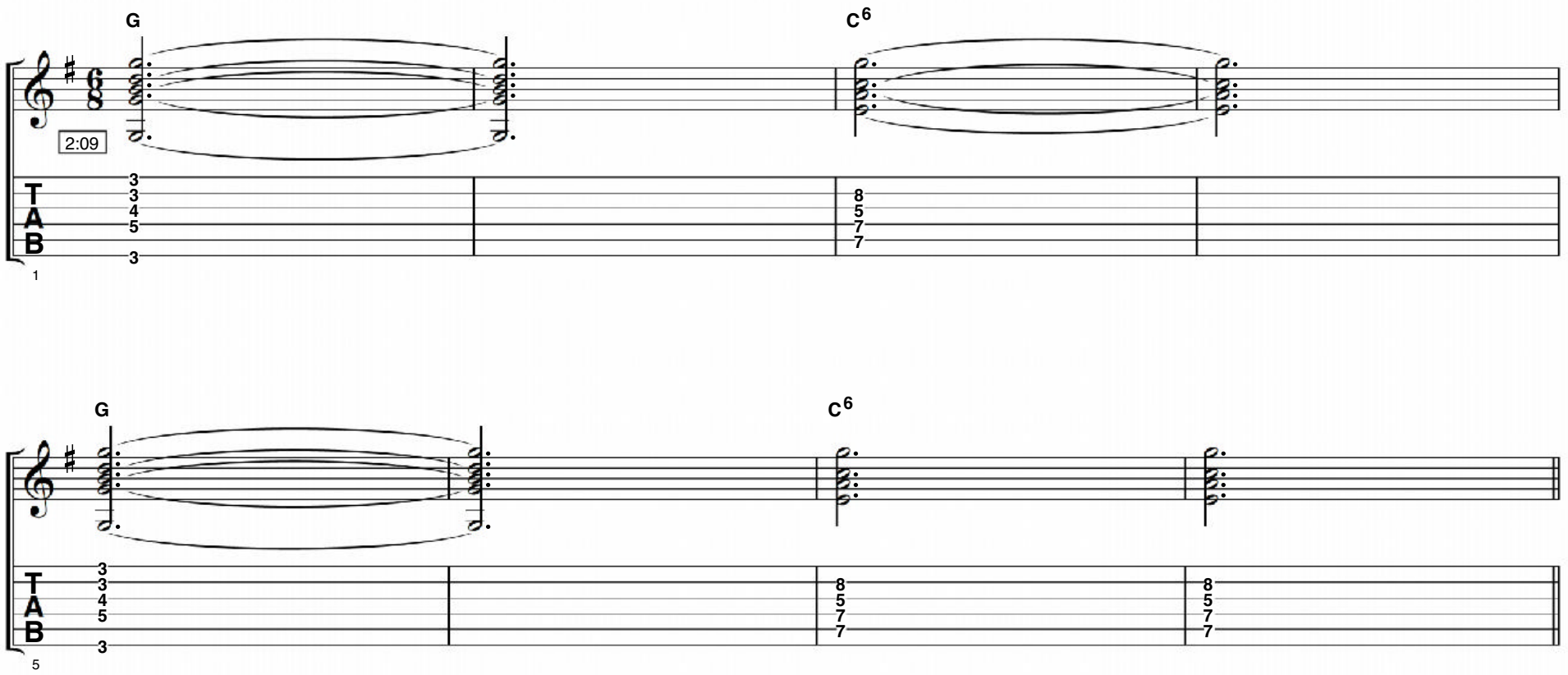
JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Solo (lead) **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**



In bars 1 to 4, John uses the notes from the G major pentatonic scale played *along* the second string. From bar 5, the notes are in a higher G major pentatonic shape. Be careful not to overbend the half-step bend on the 19th fret (bar 8) or, an octave lower, on the 12th fret (bar 9).

JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Solo (rhythm)

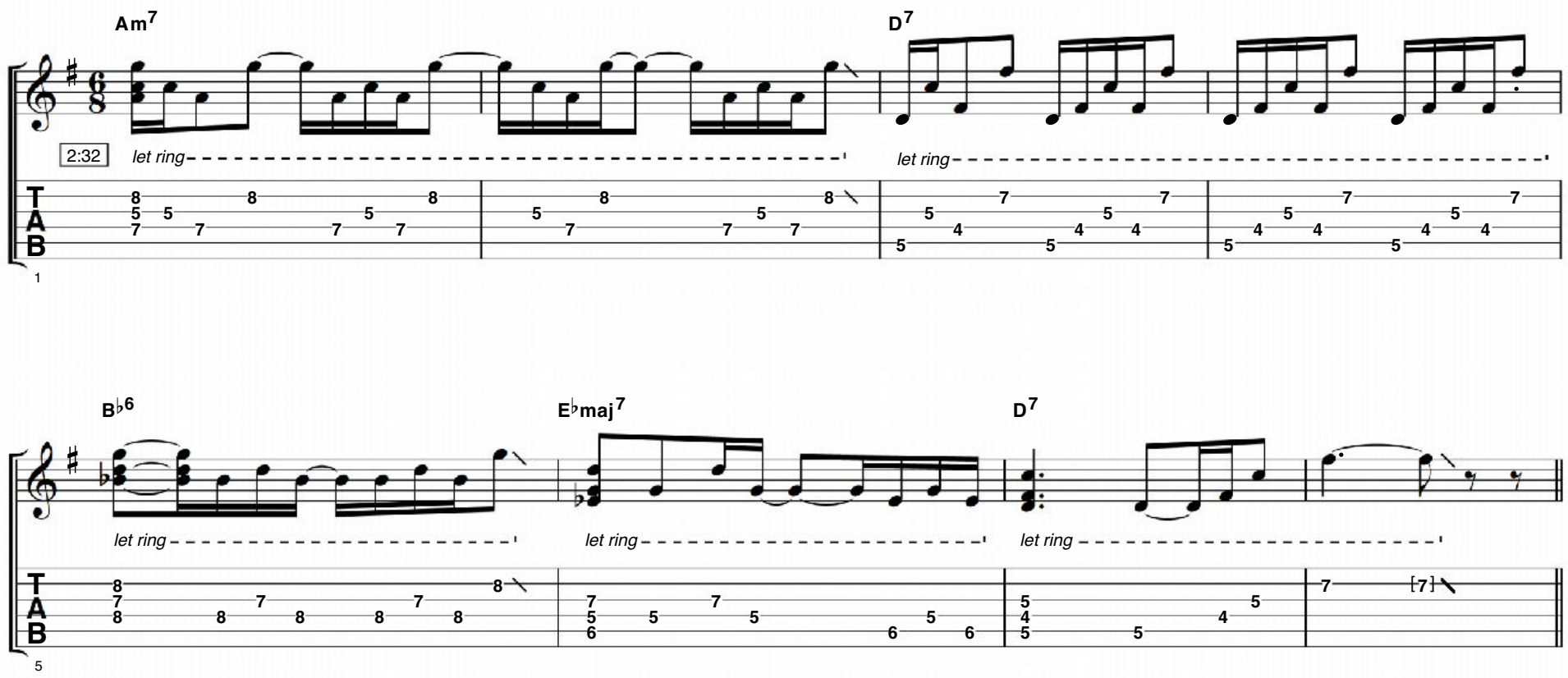
BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



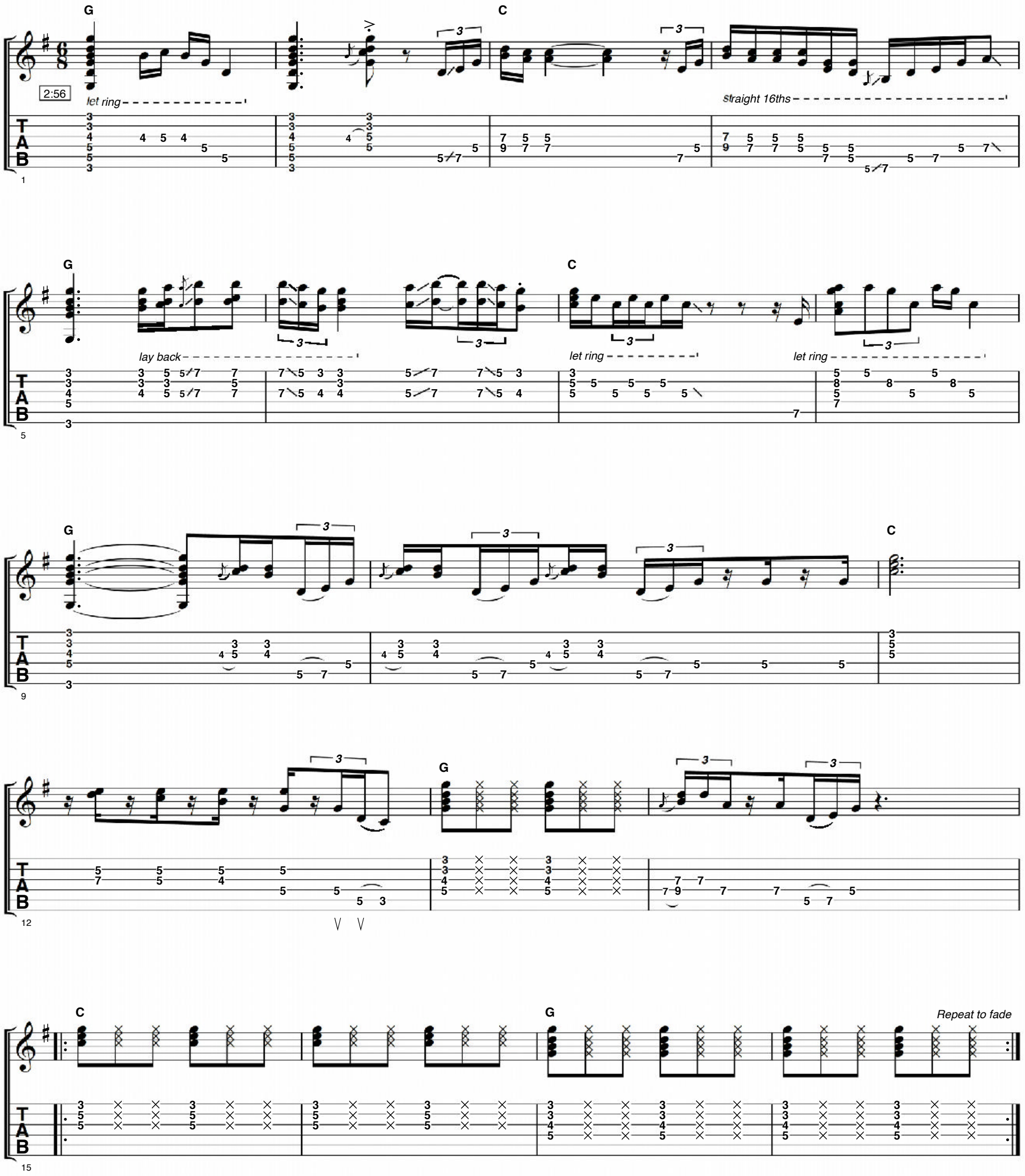
To ensure the solo has room to breathe, these accompanying chords are simply strummed once and left to ring. Just aim for clean fretting and good timing.

JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Bridge 3

BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO



Remember to hold down the full chord shape right at the start of the bar before you start picking the notes, allowing the notes to ring into each other as indicated by the 'let ring' instructions.

JOHN MAYER GRAVITY Outro **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**

Mayer ramps up the intensity here, with lots of diads and partial chords. Watch out for the tricky phrase in bar 4; you'll need to take care with your barring finger to ensure all the diads sound cleanly, particularly as you change from string to string.

AC/DC
HIGHWAY TO HELL

Take a look at Rockschool's easy version of AC/DC's classic rock 'n' roll smash from 1979

This month, we're looking at a stone cold rock 'n' roll classic, AC/DC's *Highway To Hell* – the title track from the Aussie rockers' sixth studio album. The song sees lead guitarist Angus Young taking centre stage, launching into the intro riff unaccompanied until the drums and vocals come in, shortly afterwards followed by bass and rhythm guitar.

Rockschool's Grade Two arrangement is an abridged version of the track, with most of the key riffs transcribed, along with a short lick from the solo – which amounts to most of the song.

Listen to the original recording and you'll hear that the opening riff is played unaccompanied on guitar. If you're jamming with a band, you'd better make sure you get the timing and tempo right, 'cos they'll be following your lead! Rockschool's backing track helpfully includes a tap on the hi-hat on beats 2 and 3 to help you keep time.

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Whether you're taking your first steps on guitar or moving into further/higher education, a Rockschool Grade will improve your playing ability whilst you learn iconic tracks from the world of popular music. For more info visit: www.rslawards.com

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HIGHWAY TO HELL
Words and Music by Bon Scott, Angus Young, Malcolm Young
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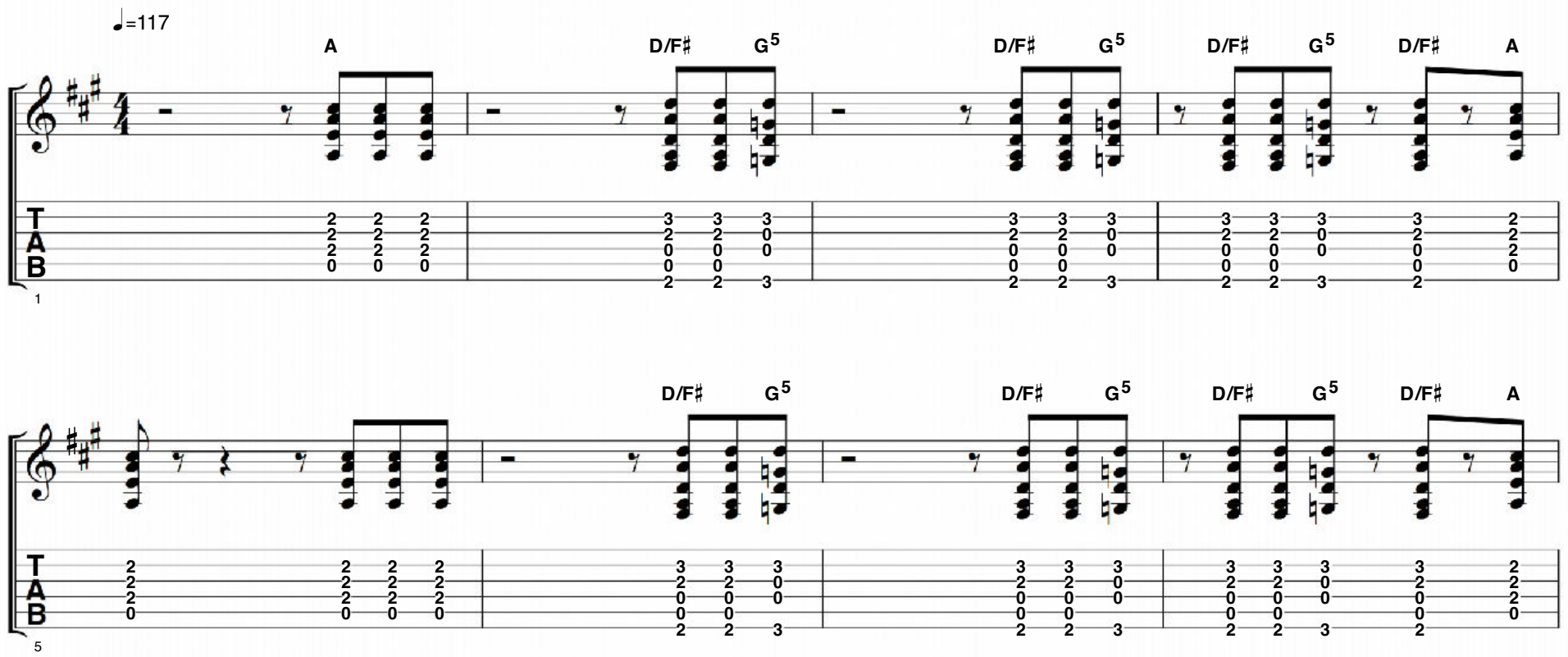
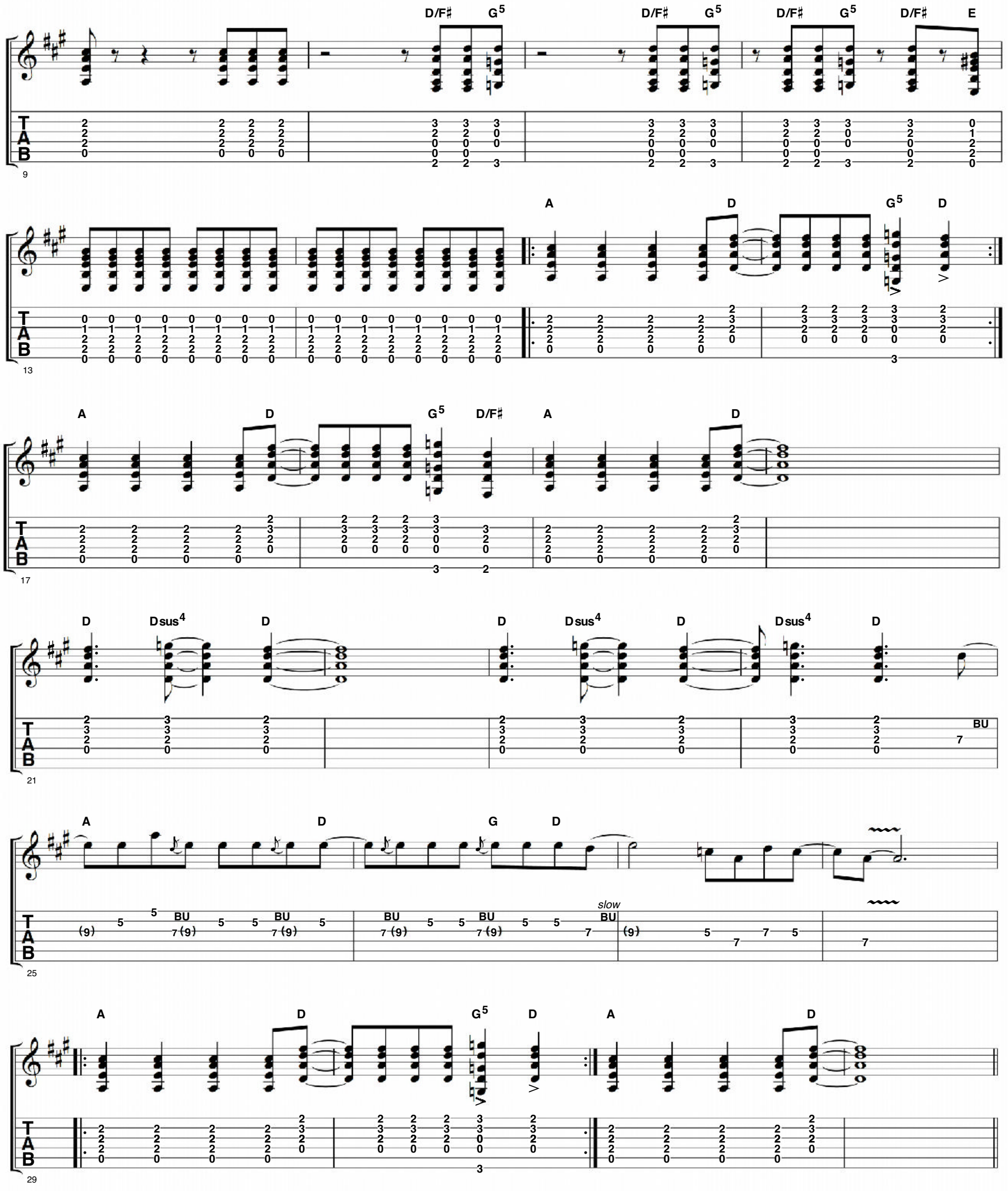
AC/DC HIGHWAY TO HELL **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**



Words Jono Harrison Photo Getty

FULL TRACK + BACKING (BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO)
This song comes with a full demo track and backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

AC/DC HIGHWAY TO HELL

BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO

Bars 1 to 14 are an abridged version of the intro and verse. Bars 15 to 20 show chorus 1 in full, before you reach the breakdown (bars 21 to 24) and a brief four-bar lead lick in bar 25. There's lots of repetition here, so practise each part on its own before gradually piecing the arrangement together.

OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

JAKE BUGG
ALL I NEED

Get in the gospel groove and boost your alternate picking technique with this month's easy repertoire booster

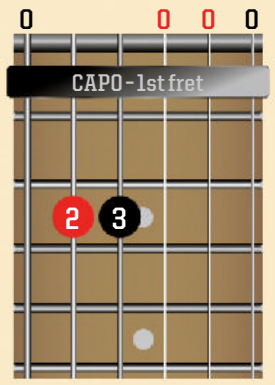
Jake Bugg burst onto the UK music scene back in 2012 with the release of his self-titled debut album. It was a huge success, achieving double platinum sales and peaking at number 1 in the UK charts.

Bugg's familiar indie-folk-rock style changed direction with the release of *All I Need* in 2021. This gospel-flavoured powerhouse features a hypnotic pentatonic riff, bombastic drums and a cracking chorus. Add in the Urban Flames youth vocal collective and you have a track that's guaranteed to get stuck in your head.

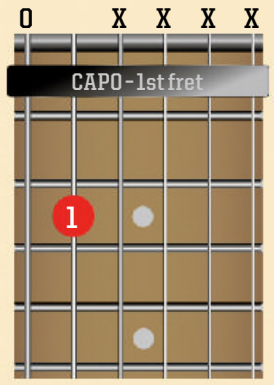
The track opens with the main riff played pizzicato on strings, but we've arranged the part for guitar so you can play along from the top. However, you don't have to play the riff; you can instead strum an F minor chord over the verse and pre-chorus if you prefer. Anyway, the most important thing here is to get jamming, so make sure to check our backing track.

CHORDS

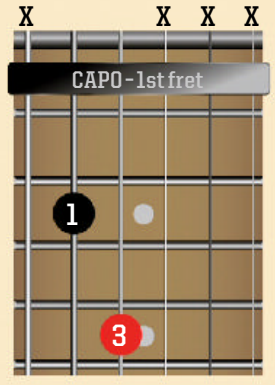
Jake recorded a great acoustic version of this song with a capo on the 1st fret. There's no sense in battling with a fistful of barre chords if you don't have to, so we've included the chords in their capo'd form here. Just four simple open shapes are all you need to play along to our backing track. Aim for a simple down-up strumming pattern (i.e., two strums per beat) throughout.



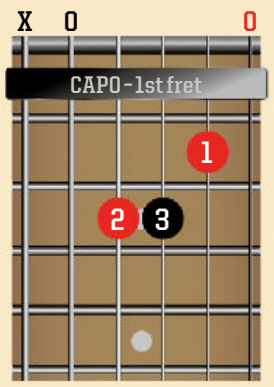
Fm
(Em)



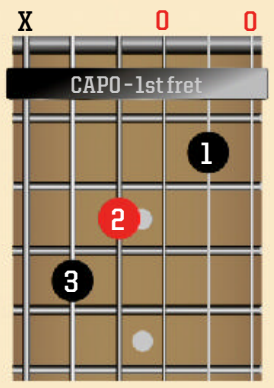
F5
(E5)



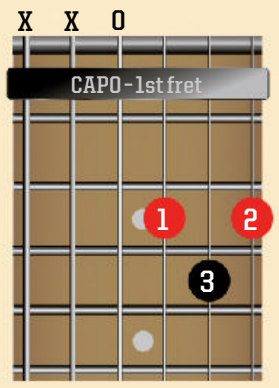
C5
(B5)



B♭m
(Am)



D♭
(C)



E♭
(D)

ALL I NEED
Words and Music by Jake Bugg and Steve Mac
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Guitars and backing Phil Capone Photo Getty

BACKING TRACK (BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO)
This song comes with a full backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

SONGSHEET

All I Need

Intro (main riff)

Verse 1

Fm
Call me cynical, but original

Tryin' to fit into a world that's so digital

Came to let you know

I left the pigeon hole

Now I gotta find an edge, won't let it go

Pre-chorus

F5 C5 F5 C5
I don't think twice 'cause I know my mind
F5 C5
This could be our time
F5 C5
Tonight just feels so right

Chorus

B♭m D♭
All I need
Fm E♭
It don't let me down, it don't let me down
B♭m D♭
All I need
Fm E♭
It don't let me down, it don't let me down
B♭m
Tell me where the fight is
D♭
Tell me where the high is
Fm
Can you hear me now?
E♭
Can you hear me now?
B♭m
Tell me where the fight is
D♭
Tell me where the high is
Fm
Can you hear me now?
E♭
Can you hear me now?

Interlude (main riff)

Verse 2

Fm
I know who you are, and I'm never wrong

I believe you're nothing

If you think that you are someone

Just try and realise

That you don't have to lie

Everybody's trying to live

Just one day at a time

Repeat pre-chorus

Repeat chorus

Interlude (main riff x2)

Pre-chorus 3

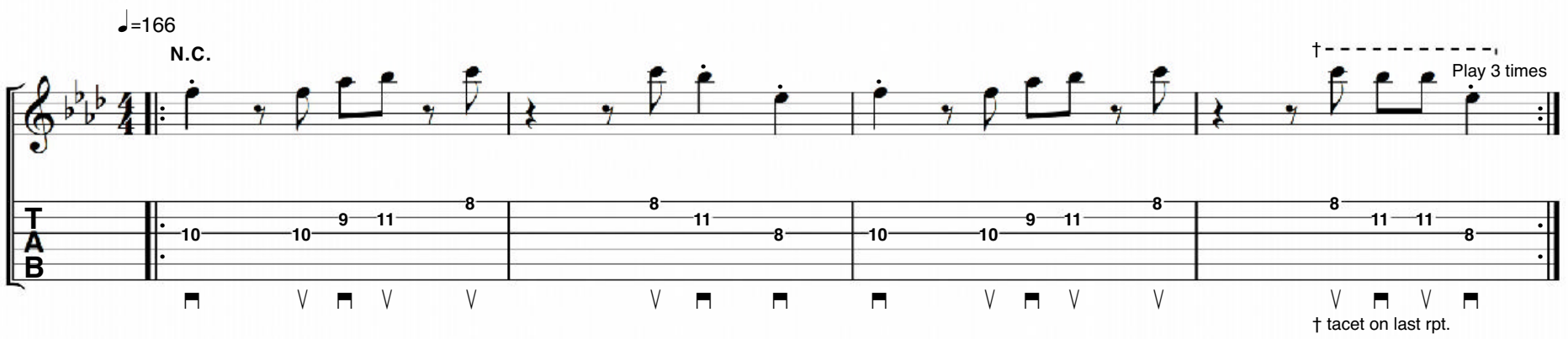
Fm
I don't think twice

'Cause I know my mind

Repeat chorus

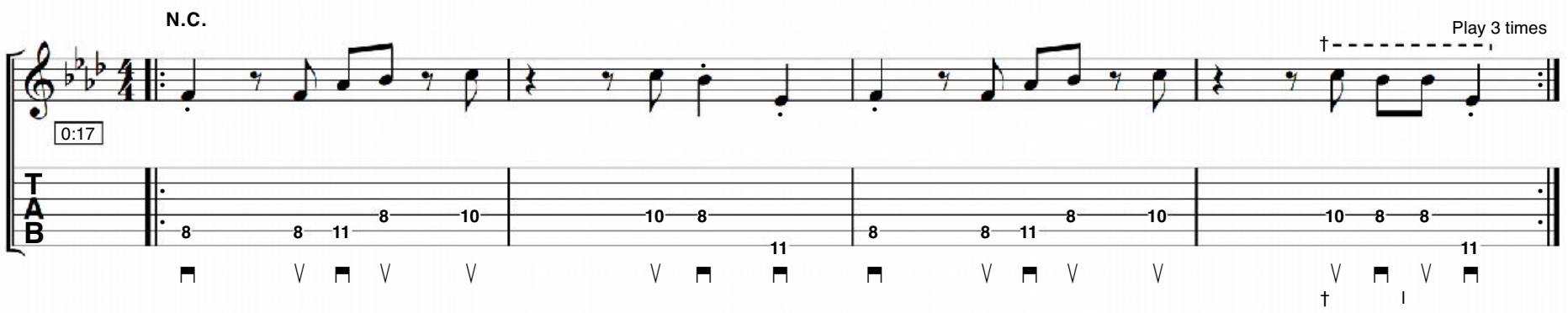
Repeat main riff

JAKE BUGG ALL I NEED Main riff **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**



This riff is a great workout for your fourth finger, often neglected by aspiring players but essential for efficient fretting. Although you could play the riff using downstrokes, alternate picking (as shown) is preferable as it's more efficient in terms of your hand movement, and it ensures a rhythmically accurate performance.

JAKE BUGG ALL I NEED Main riff (octave down) **BIT.LY/TG357AUDIO**



After 12 bars, the main riff is doubled an octave down – and we've tabbed it here for you. Alternatively, if you want to hear both parts together, use an octaver effect set to one octave down and just keep playing the original part. We rather like the EHX Nano Pog pedal.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE BEST NEW GEAR

Welcome to the GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome*) Station! Every issue, TG scours the market for the hottest new gear and brings you transparent reviews that you can trust. From the smallest of accessories that make your life easier, to big investments, such as brand new guitars, amps and effects pedals – if it's worth your attention, you'll find it here!

HOW WE TEST

CURATION
Our product selection is driven by our love of gear. We select the most exciting products on the market every month to bring you opinions you can trust.

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS
We're not gear snobs here at *Total Guitar*. We judge it on whether it looks good, sounds good and plays well – not by the name on the headstock.

***WHAT IS GAS?**
Gear Acquisition Syndrome is the guitar-player's never-ending urge to acquire new gear, irrespective of whether they actually need it. Don't pretend you don't have it – we all do!

NO SNAKE OIL
You won't find us getting hung up on hokey mythology or nonsense marketing speak: we aim to bring you bullsh*t-free opinions on the gear you're interested in.

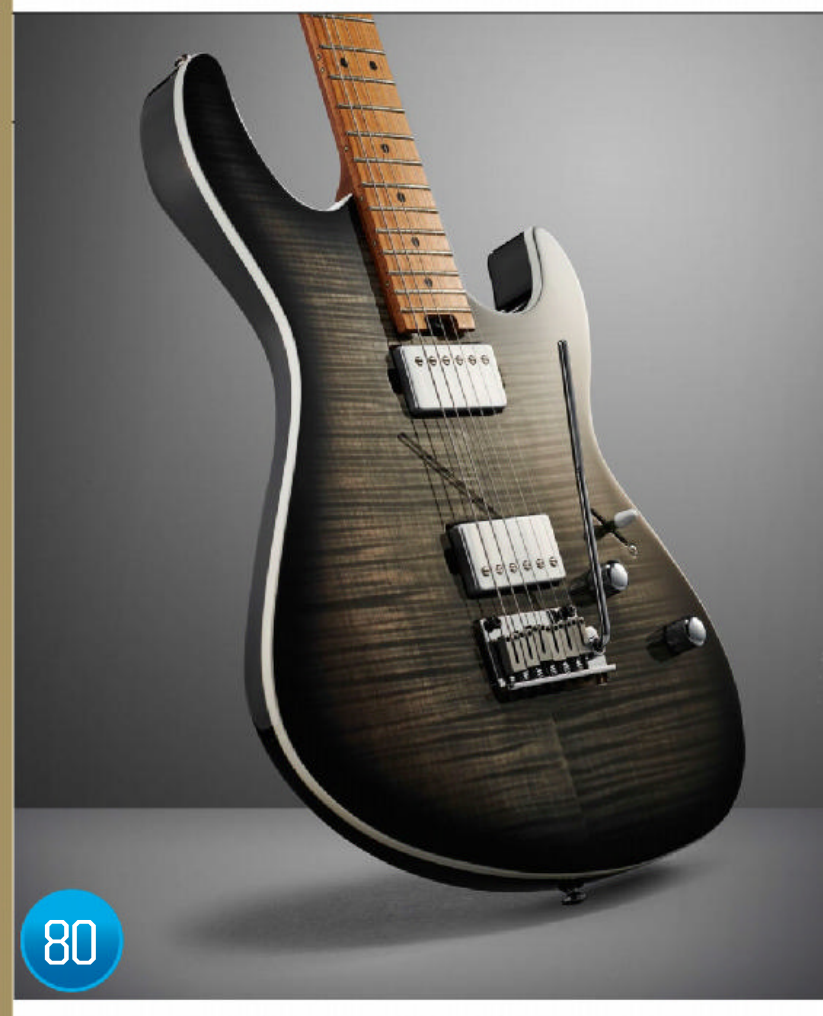
WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT
TG review scores are a true reflection of our experts' opinion on the product they've been testing. You'll never find a rating in our mag that has been bought and paid for.

REAL WORLD REVIEWS
We test every product under the conditions that they were designed for. For example, if an amp is designed to be played loud, rest assured that we'll have tested it at rehearsal/gig volumes!

BEST BUY AWARD
TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you *need* to check out

PLATINUM AWARD
Reserved for the very best of the best, TG's Platinum Awards are given to class-leading, gamechanging products that score a maximum 5 stars in every category.

SUPERB, A BEST BUY | EXCELLENT | ABOVE AVERAGE KIT | SOME ISSUES | POOR



79 START ME UP
Five new products you need to check out

80 CORT G290 FAT II
Cracking Cort all-rounder just got better!

84 THE TG TEST: GIBSON MAESTRO PEDALS
Maestro released some classics in the 60s and 70s, and now Gibson has revived the brand with five new pedals

90 ORANGE THE GUITAR BUTLER
Are you being served?

92 BOSS GX-100
Boss is back with its leanest, meanest floorboard yet

94 PIGTRONIX CONSTELLATOR MODULATED ANALOGUE DELAY
Bucket Brigade delay in a small package

04

02

01

03

05

START ME UP!

Five awesome new products to get your gear engine revving this month...

SQUIER CONTEMPORARY ACTIVE JAZZMASTER HH

1 The Contemporary range was only updated late last year but it's doing so well there are already new additions; including this active HH Jazzmaster. There's some undeniable Jim Root vibes with this Jazzmaster, but with the new finish twists of Shell Pink Pearl and Sunset Metallic. A roasted maple neck, 2-point trem with block saddles, sculpted neck heel and Squier SQR active ceramic humbucking pickups round out an attractive spec.

£419

www.fender.com

HARLEY BENTON POWERPLANT ISO-3AC SAG

2 Here's a strange one; HB is expanding its great value pedalboard power supply range with one that aims to recreate the response of a dying battery. Why is this something a guitarist would want, you ask? Denying a drive pedal like a fuzz its required voltage can result in interesting, sometimes desirable tones. Eric Johnson is someone that seeks such sounds with his 9-volt batteries. Trim pots are included here to reduce the voltage if required.

£57

www.harleybenton.com

ELECTRO-HARMONIX NANO PULSAR

3 All the joy of an iconic Variable Shape Stereo Tremolo but with less real estate on your pedalboard. That's sound like a compelling sell to us. There are simple controls for Volume, Rate, Depth and Shape, with a toggle switch for alternating between the Pulsar's Triangle and Square modes. While the pedal is a fully-fledged tremolo in mono mode, a stereo setup will unleash lush full-spectrum panning.

$99

www.ehx.com

ORANGE O BONES HEADPHONES

4 Orange Amplification now has an impressive lineup of wireless ear gear and the O Bones are the latest addition, using 'state-of-the-art bone conduction technology' to transmit audio waves to you via your facial bones. to deliver clear mids and highs with rich low end via 16mm speaker capsules. The earphones don't need to sit inside your ear as a result so that's a win for hygiene, and safety too when you're crossing the road.

£79

www.orangeamps.com

NEURAL DSP TONE KING IMPERIAL MKII SUITE

5 Neural DSP can deliver on heavy tones with its plugins (acclaimed signature Archetype packs for Gojira and John Petrucci) but this proves its equally confident in cleaner climes. Get the authentic sounds of the boutique two-channel combo, with spring reverb, tremolo, onboard attenuator and a selection of digital stompboxes to accompany it, plus a wah too. The amp model itself offers Lead and Rhythm channel and a Mid-Bite control to dial in as required.

$99

www.neuraldsp.com

CORT G290 FAT II £639

Cracking Cort all-rounder just got better!

Back in 2019, we looked at the first G290 FAT and gave it a unanimous five-star rating. We weren't the only ones. Media outlets and internet influencers were equally vocal: Cort make really good guitars! Regular readers will know that, of course, and as we've detailed, Cort is the house brand of the huge Indonesian Cor-Tek enterprise that builds guitars for many major brands, not least PRS. And while many of those PRS SEs are creeping close to the £1k threshold, Cort's own instruments are a little less salty in the outlay department. At just £639, for example, this upgraded G290 might not include a gigbag but it packs a very serious punch.

For 2022 then the Mk II version is upgraded in a couple of areas. Most obviously, the neck and fingerboard swaps from standard maple to the much more on-trend roasted maple which aside from promised claims of superior stability is a lovely deep caramel in colour. The roasted maple is also satin finished and as you put in the playing hours that should burnish up nicely to a very worn in gloss; if you can't wait that long a quick rub with 0000 wire wool or similar Scotch-Brite pad will have it feeling like a boutique beauty in minutes. The new version stops short of adding stainless steel frets – although you can get both on the top-of-the-line G300 Pro – but it doesn't ruin the fun and another new inclusion here are those glow-in-the-dark Luminlay side dots that have been the choice of the progressive brands for some time.

Another change, which reflects where we are with raw materials, is that the body wood swaps from ash to alder which as before is topped with a figured maple veneer. Our review sample in a new colour too, Trans Black Burst. Light weight ash from the USA is in short supply (and therefore becoming ore expensive) thanks to the emerald ash borer beetle and guitar makers have been looking for alternatives. Indeed, the FAT II was originally spec'd with one – sassafras – although that wasn't as readily available as Cort had hoped, hence the last-minute switch to alder, even though it's completely hidden by the opaque gloss black back and sides. Weight-wise our sample is perfect at 8lbs – not feather-light or overweight – hinting at the muscular performance to come.

The rest of the specification remains the same. If it ain't broke etc. For example, the excellent two-post vibrato, mainly stainless steel and back-routed for increased upbend, is paired with rear-locking tuners with staggered height posts and a slippery and very well-cut Graph Tech Black Tusq nut. There's nothing cheap about this vibrato system and tuning stability is excelllent. As is the set-up which is low but with a little 'fight': a slight truss-rod tweak – which is dead easy via that spoke wheel adjuster at the base of the neck – was all that was needed to tweak the relief: pretty standard stuff for any new guitar.

As before, the G290 uses a pair of its own-design covered humbuckers that reflect its name. FAT isn't an acronym, it's the sonic aim of the guitar and in combination with the alder/roasted maple construction

> "A GREAT VEHICLE FOR MODDERS LOOKING TO EXPERIMENT"

1 NECK
One of the 2020 upgrades here is the roasted maple neck and fingerboard, although unlike the top-of-the-line G300 Pro we get standard nickel silver frets, not stainless steel. Glow-in-the-dark Luminlay side dots are included here, though.

2 PICKUPS
The dual humbuckers are retained from the previous model, a set of Cort 'Voiced Tone' VTH77 covered humbuckers. They direct-mount to the body but are still height adjustable thanks to both springs and rubber cushions under each pickup.

3 VIBRATO
Very similar in style to Gotoh's pro-spec 510 vibrato, the two-post CFA-III is retained from the previous model and is used, for example, on the G300 Pro. It uses stainless steel for the saddles, top plate and shaped, deep-drilled block and has a back route for extended upbend.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Alder with figured maple veneer top facing

NECK: Roasted maple, bolt-on

SCALE: 25.5" (648mm)

FINGERBOARD: Roasted maple, 12-15.75" radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

PICKUPS: Cort 'Voiced Tone' VTH77 covered humbuckers

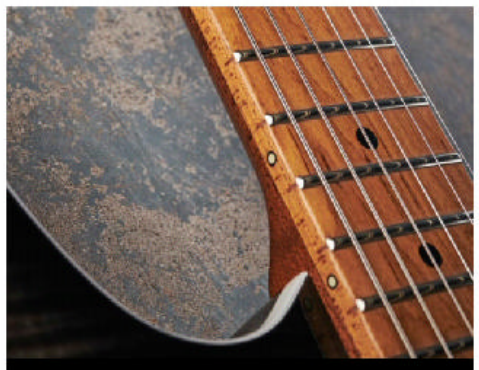
CONTROLS: Master volume and tone, 5-way lever pickup selector switch

HARDWARE: Cort CFA-III two-post vibrato, Cort staggered-post rear locking tuners – chrome-plated

FINISH: Trans Black Burst (as reviewed), Antique Violin Burst, Bright Blue Burst

CONTACT: 440 Distribution, www.cortguitars.com

Photography Olly Curtis



Radius Matters

We get very fired up about our fingerboard radius. Does it really matter?

Fender went for 7.25”; Gibson chose 12” and so from the early 1950s, the fingerboard radius debate began. This simple camber from the bass to treble side of a fingerboard can have a noticeable effect on a guitar’s feel and playability: the smaller more domed radius being the one for those that wrap their thumbs around the neck to fret the low E, the comfortable chording radius, while the flatter radius, at extremes, is for the thumb-behind shred brigade. The compound, or conical radius, as with our Cort, reflects the actual arch of the strings from the narrower width of the neck at the nut to the wider spread at the bridge. It’s often seen as a ‘modern’ feature when in fact it’s simply good guitar-making.

and the long Fender scale of 25.5” that’s exactly what we hear from the bridge humbucker, a close cousin we’d say to Seymour Duncan’s classic JB. The neck pickup is more vintage in style and output but suits the platform perfectly, a mashup of a Les Paul and a Telecaster with a boot up its backside. To be honest, we’d rock just those sounds but thanks to some tricky switching on the five-way lever switch we get both the inner and outer coils of each humbucker in parallel for real funky single coil mixes, which are hum-cancelling, too.

The G290 retains its compound radius fingerboard and big frets too and combined with a neck that feels like a C-meets-D, a little thicker in depth for example than Fender’s Player Plus, it doesn’t feel like a shred-machine at all, it’s more classic but just plays really well.

With its classy rock-to-funk duality it’s a shoo-in for anyone needing to cover the classics and it’s a near perfect guitar for the practising musician. It’s also a great vehicle for any modders out there wanting to experiment with different pickups and wiring combinations.

Can we give it a six-star rating? Well, it’s what it deserves. Cort has unleashed a monster!

Dave Burrluck

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★★

ALSO TRY...

PRS SE STANDARD 24-08 — £620

This new 2022 addition uses eight-sound pickup switching, but here it’s on a bound-edge mahogany body, without a maple top, and with a 24-fret rosewood fingerboard.

FENDER PLAYER STRATOCASTER HSH — £739

Less modern in style this packs a similar punch with an alder body, maple neck with 9.5” pau ferro fingerboard and two-post vibrato.

CORT G300 PRO — £749

Another recommendation from the Cort range, the G300 Pro uses a basswood body with roasted maple neck and fingerboard with a compound radius and stainless steel frets.

PJD Guitars

EST.2010

CAREY STANDARD

Guitarist CHOICE 9/10

WWW.PJDGUITARS.COM

GIBSON MAESTRO PEDALS

Maestro released some classics in the 60s and 70s, and now Gibson has revived the brand with a range of new pedals...

Words Trevor Curwen **Photography** Adam Gasson

It's 1965, and the Rolling Stones have released a new single. *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* is an instant sensation due to Keith Richard's unforgettable riff, which introduced the sound of a fuzz pedal to a worldwide audience. While there had been records featuring fuzz before, this was the one that really put it on the map and sparked a demand from guitar players for the sound. The fuzz pedal that Keith used was the Maestro FZ-1 which first saw the light of day in 1962 and, 60 years on, Gibson have revived the Maestro brand name for a series of new pedals. If you've never heard of Maestro that may be because the original brand became extinct in 1979, but you'll certainly have heard their gear in action – that lovely liquid phasing on the Isley Brothers' *That Lady* was a PS-1 Phase-Shifter, the distinctive wah intro on the *Theme From Shaft* was a BG-1 Boomerang Wah and the various models of the Echoplex tape echo were used by many, not least Jimmy Page. The five new all-analogue Maestro pedals; the Fuzz-Tone FZ-M, Discover Delay, Comet Chorus, Ranger Overdrive and Invader Distortion are the sort of substantially-built pedals that could double as a doorstop if you weren't making music. Although not huge, they are perhaps a tad larger than one would expect for a 3-knob single footswitch pedal, but have all the connectivity, including the socket for a 9-12V power adapter, at the top end for ease of pedalboard use. The pedals can also run from a 9V battery accessed by loosening two screws, one each side of the pedal, and lowering a bottom plate which hinges on the remaining two screws. There's a slightly sloping top panel to make footswitching easier, plus you'll know when each pedal is active as the red, yellow and blue Maestro bugle logo lights up. Perhaps the main selling point, though, is that each pedal features two distinct sounds called up by a small toggle switch; "Two pedals in one" says Gibson.

We're looking at four pedals from the range here. Keep your eyes peeled for a review of the Invader Distortion in a future issue of the mag.

£139

MAESTRO FUZZ-TONE FZ-M

Satisfaction guaranteed?

The FZ-1 Germanium fuzz pedal went through some different incarnations in its lifetime including a transistor change in the FZ-1A from 1966, the 1968 Robert Moog designed FZ-1B with Silicon transistors, the FZ-1S in the 1970s and even a limited numbers re-issue of the FZ-1A by Gibson in the 1990s. The latest in that line is this new FZ-M which comes equipped with two distinct sounds – a nod to the past in 'Classic' said to be based on the FZ-1A sound, plus 'Modern' which Gibson describes as a fuller and heavier tone. The Classic setting is really all you need to nail that *Satisfaction* riff. Turn up that Attack knob and you'll be getting a cool mid-1960s fuzz sound that is at the same time lean and saturated with a raspy edge. It's a bit of a scooped sound with attenuated low end/lower mids but it's powerful. It's at it brightest with the tone knob full up, but all points on the knob sound good – just roll it back to cut down the high end presence depending on your needs.

If you switch over to the Modern sound there's a quite different experience, and the Tone knob is key to everything here. Running with the Tone knob fully left offers the fattest sound with plenty of low end girth but still enough top end to stop things getting woolly, turning the knob up adds treble all the while reducing the low end providing plenty of useful tones on its arc of travel. Get past perhaps about 2-0'clock though and things start to get nasty as the lower end is sacrificed for the sort of harsher upper mids and treble that'll slice your eardrums. From sixties garage, through classic rock to hooligan, this pedal should satisfy a lot of fuzz needs.

AT A GLANCE

FEATURES: True bypass, two different fuzz types

CONTROLS: Attack (Fuzz), Tone, Level, Modern/Classic switch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9-12V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 84mm (w) x 126mm (d) x 60mm (h)

£149

MAESTRO DISCOVERY DELAY

Analogue delay with modulation

It may have been seen as old and tired technology when digital delay was the new thing many years ago but these days guitar players can't seem to get enough of analogue delay judging by the amount of new pedals out there using BBD chips. The Discoverer is of that ilk and clocks in with a delay time range that runs from 20ms up to 600ms allowing you to use it in many ways. At the lower end of the delay knob travel you'll find rough reverb, turn it up a bit more for a doubling effect and then to around it's 9-0'clock position for some cool rockabilly slapback. Beyond that you can dial in delays to add spacey depth behind your playing or create some prominent rhythmic repeats in true The Edge style.

There's no tone knob here to alter it but the tonal balance of the repeats is just right, sitting snugly with your dry tone and becoming more dissolute and breaking up as the tail progresses. The Sustain knob turns up the feedback from a single repeat to a long trail of them and has plenty of travel before you get into self-oscillation territory where the repeats take off on their own. In the EHX Deluxe Memory Man tradition, modulation is the switchable facility here. There's just the toggle switch to bring it in but you get internal trim pots to adjust the rate and width.

As shipped, the modulation is a floaty otherworldly sound that combines well with the delay. It's not unlike a rotary speaker effect but the trimpots will let you tone that down to something more subtle like mild chorus or an even more obvious detuned warble effect with wayward pitchshifting. No bells and whistles, just simplicity of use combined with quality sound.

AT A GLANCE

FEATURES: True bypass, 20 to 600ms delay range, modulation

CONTROLS: Delay, Mix, Sustain, Mod On/Off switch, Bypass footswitch, internal trim pots for modulation rate and width

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9-12V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 84mm (w) x 126mm (d) x 60 mm (h)

£139

MAESTRO RANGER OVERDRIVE

One pedal - two drives

If there's any pedal that can benefit from Gibson's avowed two-pedals-in-one approach for the new Maestro series its the humble overdrive. Do we want a transparent low to mid gain overdrive or do we want something a bit gainier and amp-like? The Ranger sorts this by sort of giving you both, although it's not just that one option has higher gain than the other. The Lo position of the toggle switch is where you'll find the lower gain overdrive but there's more to it than just that, as this setting also has a bit of your clean sound mixed in with it. There's not much action until the Gain knob's at 9-o'clock, (unity gain with the Output level at max), so it's beyond that where you'll start to hear any effect on your sound and can explore all the beyond-clean and just breaking up sounds through to a decent amount of raunch, all nicely retaining a touch of clarity with that clean element mixed in. The tone knob operating as a low pass filter will adjust the top end, maybe building in some brightness or rolling it back a touch to best match your amp sound. Get the dirt you want on the Gain knob and set the output level where you need it; once your Gain knob is beyond 9-o'clock you can use the Level knob to build in a boost for when the pedal is kicked in or to drive your amp's front end. The Hi setting gets gainier, although not vastly so, but it does lose the clean element so the whole sound is driven. Nicely responsive to dynamics and guitar volume, this pedal's two natural-sounding voices make it a versatile asset to have in front of your amp.

AT A GLANCE

FEATURES: True bypass, two gain modes

CONTROLS: Gain, Level, Tone, Hi/Lo switch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9-12V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 84mm (w) x 126mm (d) x 60 mm (h)

£139

MAESTRO COMET CHORUS

Earth or Orbit?

We were hoping that Gibson might delve into their past and give us a new stompbox with PS-1 phaser sounds but the sole modulation pedal in the first issue of new pedals is the Comet Chorus. Following the standard paradigm of any chorus pedal, this has knobs to control the modulation's Depth and Rate (Speed) but also has a feature that's becoming more common in this type of pedal – a Mix knob that sets the dry/wet blend of the effect, allowing nuanced setting up of the sound so you get a full range from adding an ear-candy whisper of effected sound to your dry signal for subtle interest right through to a full-on effect. The two toggle-switched options here are 'Earth' which is a standard chorus effect, swirly, floaty and rich, that sounds instantly familiar and 'Orbit' which is a little more intense. Switching to Orbit appears to add a tremolo effect to the chorus to create something that sounds more like a rotary speaker. That tremolo aspect is most apparent with the depth turned up full where the on/off sharpness of the effect can really be felt. The amount of the tremolo can be adjusted by an internal trim pot which you can turn clockwise to increase the effect or counter-clockwise to decrease it, but straight out of the box our pedal was turned up full which we liked. Between those two effects types and the juxtaposition of Depth and Speed knobs there's plenty that you can call up but it's by using the Mix knob that you unlock the pedals flexibility: The blend between dry and effect really does make a difference and will reward experimentation with it; we found a sweet spot at around 11-o'clock where there's a washed out flange-like effect.

AT A GLANCE

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Depth, Speed, Mix, Earth/Orbit switch, Bypass footswitch, internal trim pot for rotary speaker effect

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9-12V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 84mm (w) x 126mm (d) x 60 mm (h)

MAESTRO FUZZ-TONE FZ-M

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

MAESTRO DISCOVERY DELAY

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

MAESTRO RANGER OVERDRIVE

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

MAESTRO COMET CHORUS

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

ARE GIBSON'S PEDALS AS GOOD AS THEIR GUITARS?

Well, it's Gibson isn't it? You'd expect a company synonymous with quality guitars to come up with some quality guitar pedals and they haven't let us down. While we might want to take slight issue with the size of the pedals when it's sometimes a squeeze to fit everything you want on a pedalboard, they are certainly distinctive and reasonably priced. In terms of operability and sound quality we have no qualms – all do exactly what's expected of them and that 2-in-1 capability confers a versatility that some of the competition may lack. That's particularly true in the case of the fuzz and drive pedals, where the two voicings will add genuine flexibility your signal chain. Likewise, two distinct voices in a chorus pedal is no bad thing and, combined with that wet/dry mix knob, the Comet covers a lot of space. The Discovery won't suit tap tempo freaks but it can hold its own in the 'analogue delay with modulation' genre. So what next? Well, we don't actually know, but there are several pedal genres that haven't been covered by the brand and we are keeping our fingers crossed that we'll soon be hearing the psychedelic sweep of a PS-1 phaser...

GX-100

Guitar Effects Processor

A NEW ERA OF BOSS MULTI-FX

Fusing advanced BOSS tone technologies into a sleek, ultra-modern hardware design, the inspiring GX-100 delivers top-level performance everywhere you play. Explore 23 AIRD amplifiers and over 150 effects derived from the flagship GT-1000, and craft great sounds in seconds with the intuitive color touch display.

Also includes: Phrase Looper, IR Loading, USB Recording, Software Editor, Send and Return Loop

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BOSS

lift
balanced out
amp
fx return
fx send
input
ORANGE
The Guitar Butler
Dual Channel
Guitar Pre

ORANGE THE GUITAR BUTLER £279

Are you being served?

Preamp pedals can be different things, and mean different things to players too; shifting crucial backline to their feet, valve overdrive, a fly rig, direct-out recording, ultimate pedalboard solution… the flexibility they offer has now seen the tone warlocks of key brands scratching their bearded chins and cooking up units that combine amp expertise with the recognition that many guitarists seek portability. Orange has already shown form in this department; the Terror Stamp wowed us by packing a solid state power amp and ECC83-based preamp into a compact chassis, and the Bass Butler offered a two-channel bi-amp for bassists. Its success now brings us here.

> "THE SECOND VOLUME SWITCH IS IDEAL FOR YOUR SOLOS"

Like its bass brethren, this is a significantly larger footprint than the Terror Stamp and will need serious accommodation if its to be added to your 'board. It offers Clean and Dirty channels, with two volume controls for the latter, with dedicated EQs for each channel. A buffered effects loop beckons your reverb, delay and any other time-based effects to join the fun. But as this is a two-channel preamp you'll need to solve the power amp part of the equation yourself; either with your existing amp, a cab modelling unit, active cab with models, power amp pedal… or Orange's own Pedal Baby 100.

The company's approach to labelling its settings can be a Marmite issue for some; there are no words like 'Gain' or 'Mid' but icons instead. But a look at the included manual and it doesn't take long to get to grips with it. It's part of the Orange experience and we don't have a gripe with it.

This isn't a valve preamp; Orange designer Ade Emsley has instead used analogue JFE circuit design to create a dirty channel that makes no bones about being voiced towards the tube spirit of classic 70s British rock rather than Rockerverb wider appeal. While the Bass Butler had two preamp channels that ran in parallel and could be blended, the two channels here are separate. The Clean doesn't have a volume control; output is instead increased with the gain. And the headroom is impressive, offering a dependable platform for drive pedals, too.

The dirty channel is brighter at lower gain settings, getting warmer and thicker as you crank it up. This woolier territory won't be for all rock tastes, but does beg to be paired with an overdrive, and we found our EHX Soul Food was more than happy to volunteer to spike proceedings. The second volume switch is ideal for your solos, too, rounding out a preamp that should be on the shortlist for classic rockers.

Rob Laing

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

1 PRESENCE CONTROL
We liked to set this Dirty Channel control fairly high as it just helped things cut through without harshness.

2 BALANCED OUTPUT
This allows to send a signal with an inbuilt analogue cab sim to an interface for recording or a mixing desk live. The drawback is you can't turn the cab sim off if required but the results are good if you can live with that. Otherwise use the Amp output.

3 LIFT SWITCH
If you're hearing the hum of ground loop when connecting the Guitar Butler to an amp and PA live, this ground lift can help.

AT A GLANCE

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Analog channel preamp pedal

FEATURES: Clean and Dirty Channels, three-band EQ for each channel, switchable second volume level for Dirty Channel, XLR balanced out with analogue cab simulation, ground lift switch, FX loop

CONTROLS: Clean Channel: Treble, Middle, Bass, Gain; Dirty Channel: Treble, Middle, Bass, Volume 1&2, Presence, Gain

CONNECTIONS: Input, Amp output FX Second & Return, Balanced out

POWER: 18V DC

DIMENSIONS: 179 [w] x 155 [d] x 62mm [h]

Photography Phil Barker

BOSS GX-100
GUITAR EFFECTS PROCESSOR
EXP 1 SW
MENU
IN/OUT SETTINGS
CTL/EXP
WRITE
EFFECTS
EXIT
TUNER
SELECT
PAGE
BANK
C2
TUNE
4
3
2
1
IN
OUT
01-1
GX DUAL DRIVE
AMP2: GAIN 60
AMP2: BASS 80
AMP2: TREBLE 60
MEMORY LEVEL 100
EFFECTS
♩=120

1 TOUCH SCREEN Different views are available for parameter editing. They respond to touch control or the fine-tuning knobs below the screen.

2 1-4 AND C1 SWITCHES The bottom row of switches are easily assignable and colour-coded.

3 MIDI INPUT AND OUTPUT MIDI routing is available to those players wanting to get under the hood of the GX-100.

BOSS GX-100 €599

Boss is back with its leanest, meanest floorboard yet

Boss is the king of pedals, but when it comes to multi-effects, there has been room for improvement. While the sounds are exemplary, the effects giant's GT interface can feel a little complex compared with its competitors. Can its first touchscreen-enabled floor processor change that?

Although you might still need to refer to the manual, the unit feels noticeably more streamlined than previous Boss offerings. Once you've got the hang of the drag-and-drop signal routing, it's clearly superior to the chain building on previous Boss multi-FX units. When editing parameters, you can either tap and use the quick adjust pots along the bottom, or move to knob mode, where all parameters are shown on screen.

The modelling – which packs a host of sounds from the flagship GT-1000 – is as strong as expected. Though there are fewer amp models than some of the competition, those that are here are dynamic and responsive – these sims are almost indistinguishable from the real thing. Their only tell is the lack of problem frequencies: they're just a bit too perfect, but for many players, that will be a plus.

The GX-100's real highlight is its effects – they sound great out of the box, and even as you tweak and combine them, you'll struggle to make them sound bad. Side-by-side, the delay, reverb and modulation patches are as good, if not better than those on the flagship Boss 500-series units. When combined or stacked in a virtual chain, boosts and drives react in a very realistic way, and setting up parallel chains is a breeze. They sound great in front of a real-life tube amp, too.

> "THE GX-100 IS BOSS' BEST MULTI-EFFECTS UNIT YET"

After playing through a real amp, returning to the GX-100's models and going direct in isn't any less inspiring or dynamic than the real thing. The killer feature is being able to easily set up multi-amp and stereo rigs. Lugging around two amps is no fun, so this is an area where amp sims really have the edge. Whether it's to blend a Marshall-esque crunch and a Vox-style chime, or simply to use a wet/dry signal chain, the results are excellent.

While it might take a bit of learning, it's easy to reconfigure the GX-100 to match your preferences. The chain building is still a bit behind some of the competition, but the sounds are next-level. Even if you don't need all the amp modelling features, that extra horsepower shows when using the overdrive and distortion models, and the delay, reverb and modulation effects are outstanding. Boss' best multi-FX and amp processor yet.

Alex Lynham

SUMMARY	
	FEATURES
	SOUND QUALITY
	VALUE FOR MONEY
	BUILD QUALITY
	USABILITY
	OVERALL RATING

AT A GLANCE

EFFECTS: 154

AMP MODELS: 23

A/D/A CONVERSION: 24 bits

CONNECTIONS: INPUT jack, OUTPUT (L/MONO, R) jacks, SEND jack, RETURN jack: 1/4-inch phone type

PHONES jack: Stereo 1/4-inch phone type

CTL3, 4/EXP2 jack, AMP CTL1, 2 jack: 1/4-inch TRS phone type

MIDI (IN, OUT) connectors

USB COMPUTER PORT: USB B type

BLUETOOTH ADAPTOR PORT: BT-DUAL ADAPTOR, DC IN jack

POWER: AC Adaptor (supplied)

Photography Ollie Curtis

PIGTRONIX CONSTELLATOR MODULATED ANALOGUE DELAY

£89

Bucket Brigade delay in a small package

Your pedalboard is full… Something has to give. Well, not necessarily, you can just downsize to mini pedals. The prospect here is you'll still get bonafide Bucket Brigade analogue modulated delay but at reduced real estate.

It's a reassuringly weighty little thing, packing in five different controls to the front panel, including the Feel button which gives the Constellator a distinct calling card in an increasingly crowded marketplace of delays vying for your attention.

The two MN3005 BBD chips inside are contemporary versions of the Panasonic Bucket Brigade variant. The potential of the spec is beautifully degrading repeats and chaotic oscillation if you want to push the repeats that way. No wonder BBD was regarded as the desirable alternative to larger tape delay units back in the 70s, and remains a quirkier and more characterful option over digital delay for many players with feted vintage pedals such as the Boss DM-2 and Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory still in demand.

This certainly delivers on the BBD reputation, and the result is a really versatile little pedal. The Feel button adjusts several parameters at once for distinct chorus and the faster vibrato modes. The blue light of chorus adding a warmer, slower sustained bed to notes and chords that's great for jamming on your own with impressive headroom. As well as the usual delay suspects of slapback and vast chasms that 600ms of echo and a wide breadth of modulation can offer, this is a great pedal for tremolo-type sounds, with each mode offering two different flavours and tape-like character when pushed.

We often judge a pedal on how far down the wormhole we go and how lost in inspiration we get. The Constellator is a great delay pedal and the quality and versatility here is undeniable.

Trevor Curwen

> "THE QUALITY AND VERSATILITY HERE IS UNDENIABLE"

FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Analog delay pedal with modulation

FEATURES: Buffered bypass, up to 600ms delay time, Chorus and Vibrato modes, MN3005 BBD chip provides longest delay possible in an analogue delay.

CONTROLS: Time, Mix, Modulation, Repeats, Feel (switch between Chorus and Vibrato effect)

POWER: 9VDC (not included) 100mA

CONNECTIONS: Standard input and output

DIMENSIONS: 37.5 (w) x 93 (d) x 32mm (h)

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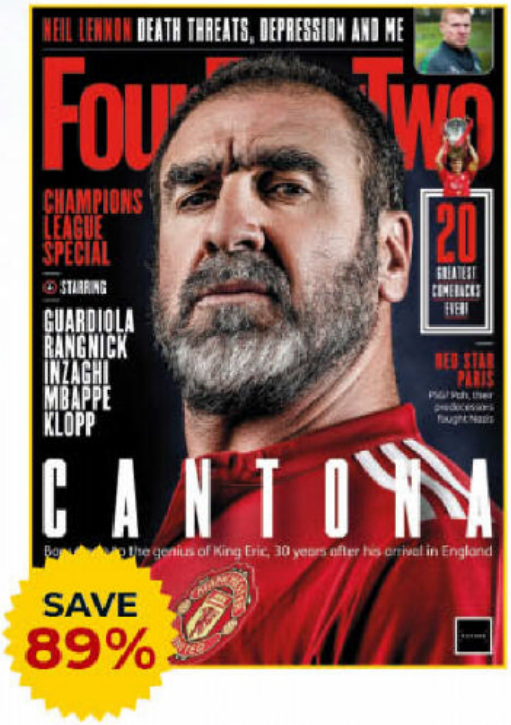

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Words Tim Tucker **Photo** Laura Harvey

SAM STEWART
LO MOON

Lo Moon's sound is a wide, cinematic, layered soundscape that's drawing comparisons with Talk Talk, Coldplay and Sigur Rós. With their latest album, *A Modern Life*, they've honed it into a unique balance of acoustic and electric guitars, drums, bass and synth. "It's more of a collaborative record," says guitarist Sam Stewart. "And more of a *guitar* record as well."

The range of Stewart's playing is masterful; one moment counterpointing melodies with delicate, spacey arpeggios, the next propelling a chorus with stadium-sized lead lines. "When what we're working on has made me think of a song or a band I like, I'll grab two or three pedals that will get me in that zone," he says. "Oftentimes it doesn't sound like whoever I was trying to emulate, but it yields something interesting."

Sam relies on a range of effects to get his sound. "Like every guitar player that's come after The Edge, I'm a big fan of delay and reverb. I found my way to The Edge much later on; my guitar heroes were Graham Coxon and Jonny Greenwood, people like that. Later on I was like, 'If everyone else likes U2, then I should probably listen to them.' And I realised, 'Oh he invented all this stuff.' So, I really like delays, reverbs, choruses and weird modulation."

Sam's favourite guitars include a unique 1962 Gretsch given to him by his father Dave Stewart, who became famous in 80s pop duo Eurythmics. "I think it's a Country Club," Sam says, "and the colour, Cadillac green, is really cool. I used to play that live with my old band, but then I realised that it was a bit risky to keep bringing it to clubs and stuff, because it might get lost or stolen. I actually did damage it once, that was horrific. It's a studio guitar now. I do session work in LA for producers and artists, and they're always like, 'Bring your Gretsch.'"

For Lo Moon's forthcoming tour opening for The War On Drugs, Sam has found a new obsession. "It's a '73 Fender Tele Deluxe, with two humbuckers, and it sounds awesome. I don't really know the differences between pickups, but any time I'd watch a live video and there was guitar tone that sounded great going through loads of effects, it tended to be a guitar with humbuckers. So I went into a guitar shop and there was this Tele that looked particularly cool, kind of coffee coloured, and it just sounded completely different to the other Teles - like, beefy! So that's what I'm using on this tour."

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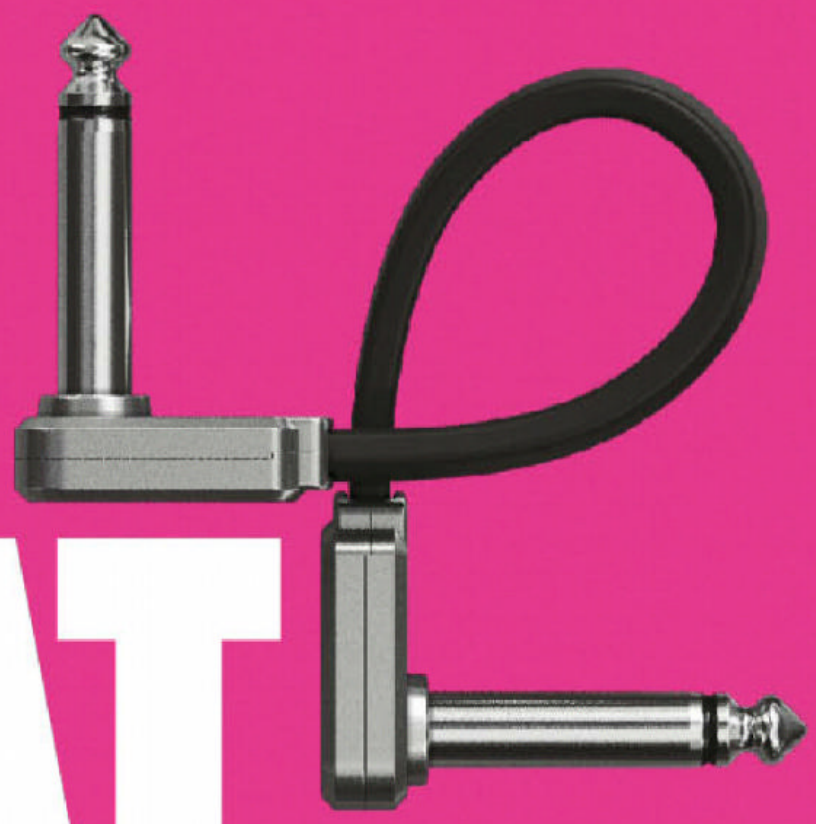

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